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Bahrain flies in aid for Iraq

BAGHDAD (AFP) — A Bahraini plane flew in $1.3 million worth of humanitarian aid on Sunday, in Manama's first such operation by air since U.N. sanctions were slapped on Iraq in 1990, the official news agency INA said. The Gulf Air plane chartered by Bahrain's Red Crescent landed at Saddam International Airport in Baghdad, loaded with 32 tonnes of medical equipment, food and clothing, collected from Bahraini individuals and companies. Members of Bahrain's consultative council and Red Crescent who arrived on the flight told INA that more aid would follow from Manama. The flight went ahead with special authorisation from a U.N. Sanctions Committee, as Bahrain followed the example of Gulf neighbours Qatar and the United Arab Emirates which flew in aid for Iraq last month.

Labour Party to send medicine, baby milk to Iraq

CAIRO (AP) — The Islamist-oriented Labour Party will send nearly two tonnes of medicine, baby formula, notebooks and pencils as humanitarian aid to children in Iraq, a party official said Sunday. The provisions "symbolise our wish — and that of the Egyptians — to defy America and lift the sanctions off Iraq," said Mohammad El Sakhawiy, head of the party's office in Cairo. He said the products were donated by people "who benefited from Iraq in the past." Thousands of Egyptian professors, doctors and labourers made money working in oil-rich Iraq in the 1970s and 1980s. Earlier this month, Egyptian businessmen and pharmaceutical companies donated baby food and medicine valued at more than $353,000 and flew the goods to Iraq, with U.N. permission.

Upon his arrival in Baghdad

Butler hails new spirit of cooperation

BAGHDAD (R) — U.N. chief arms inspector Richard Butler said after he arrived in Baghdad on Sunday that an agreement which resolved a crisis over arms inspections had created a new spirit of cooperation between Iraq and the United Nations.

"I am very glad to be here particularly after the agreement was signed between (U.N.) Secretary-General Mr. Kofi Annan and Iraq," Mr. Butler, on his first visit since the crisis ended last month, told the Iraqi News Agency INA on his arrival at Habbaniya Airport northwest of Baghdad.

"I think the agreement has created a new spirit of cooperation (between Iraq and the U.N. arms inspectors)," added Mr. Butler, chairman of the U.N. Special Commission (UNSCOM) in charge of dismantling Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

Mr. Butler was referring to an agreement signed on Feb. 23 by Mr. Annan and Iraqi leaders guaranteeing entry for UNSCOM to all facilities, including eight so-called "presidential sites" to which inspectors had previously been denied access.

The agreement defused a crisis over inspections of the eight disputed sites and averted U.S.-led military strikes against Iraq.

Iraqi Parliament Speaker Saadoun Hammadi criticised Mr. Butler, saying his record was "not positive" and hoped that he would not create a new crisis between Baghdad and U.N. arms inspectors.

"This man's record, as you know, is not positive," Mr. Hammadi told reporters. "We hope he will...behave in a fair and objective way and that he would not provoke Iraq and create a new crisis."

Mr. Butler said he would start talks with Iraqi officials on Monday and Tuesday on inspections of the "presidential sites" and other topics.

Mr. Butler was accompanied by U.N. under secretary-general for disarmament affairs, Sri Lankan Jayantha Dhanapala, who is charged with inspecting the eight disputed sites.

Under the accord reached with Iraq, Mr. Annan agreed to set up a "special group" that would be headed by Mr. Dhanapala to supervise the completion of the inspections of the presidential sites. The group would include diplomats as well as inspectors from UNSCOM.

Mr. Dhanapala, who visited Baghdad from March 11-14, issued on Thursday a list of 20 senior diplomats who would accompany UNSCOM weapons inspectors on visits to the sites. Other topics expected on Butler's agenda are Iraq's biological warfare programme, its production of deadly VX nerve gas and unaccounted for missile warheads believed to be loaded with chemical and biological weapons.

Mr. Butler arrived just two hours after a newly-appointed special envoy to Iraq, India's former U.N. ambassador Prakash Shah, flew in to Baghdad.

Mr. Shah, appointed by Mr. Annan earlier this month, will serve as a political adviser to help coordinate the large U.N. operations in Iraq and keep open communications with Iraq's leaders.

"We have been briefed to watch developments and relations between Iraq and the United Nations and avert any escalation of crisis that might develop," Mr. Shah told reporters.

Sanctions on Iraq imposed for its 1990 invasion of Kuwait will not be lifted unless the Security Council receives satisfactory reports from Mr. Butler on chemical, missile and biological weapons, and from the international atomic energy agency on nuclear weapons.

Iraq's Vice-President Taha Yassin Ramadan said on Thursday that his country stood by the deal it signed with Mr. Annan last month.

Mr. Annan, who is on a nine-day Middle East tour, said in Beirut on Saturday he hoped that arms inspectors would finish their work in Iraq soon to pave the way for the lifting of the sanctions.

Mr. Butler also said on Saturday that his team would complete its work with "lightning speed" if it was told the whole truth about Baghdad's weapons of mass destruction.

But the influential Iraqi newspaper Babel on Sunday poured scorn on Mr. Butler and accused him of following an anti-Iraq policy dictated to him by the United States.

Babel, owned by President Saddam Hussein's eldest son Uday, said that Mr. Butler should have been removed from his post but he stayed because the U.S. wants him to.

"Welcome to Baghdad Mr. chairman of the Special Commission once again," Babel said ironically. "Butler is ready to forget a lot of things in order to maintain his special ties with American officials."

United Nations chief weapons inspector Richard Butler gestures during a press conference at the U.N. headquarters in Baghdad on Sunday (Reuters photo)

68 deputies oppose government drive to control savings funds

By Fairouz Abu-Ghazaleh
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — Angered by the government's intention to control private sector provident funds, 68 Lower House deputies on Sunday signed a petition asking the government "not to interfere in these funds."

"The government intervention in this matter will only lead to the dissolution of these funds and will shake the country's national security and its economic situation," the statement said.

The Central Bank of Jordan earlier this month released a draft law that aims at regulating the saving funds of the private sector, which hold the savings of more than 150,000 employees and are estimated to be worth about JD 500 million. The draft law generated a barrage of criticism from private sector executives and employees and led the Arab Bank to dissolve its fund.

"Talk about drafting a provident funds law has created an atmosphere of apprehension and suspicion about the government's real intentions in interfering in these funds," Deputy Mohammad Abu-Hdeib told the House.

Replying on behalf of the government, Deputy Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour said that the government's intentions are not aimed at intervening with private sector savings.

"It is not true that the government wishes to impose a law on the people," he said.

Dr. Ensour, who is also minister of information, added that if the private sector wishes to regulate these funds, the government would welcome such efforts.

He said the government only proposed the draft law, but it is up to Parliament to endorse or reject it.

According to press reports this week, several companies are considering requests by their employees to liquidate their savings for fear of the proposed law.

Extremists kill 4 policemen in first major attack since Luxor

MINYA (AFP) — Suspected Islamists on Sunday shot dead four policemen and wounded 13 people in southern Egypt in their first major attack since a massacre of tourists in November, police said.

A police lieutenant and three police conscripts were killed and four other policemen were among 13 people wounded by the militants, police said.

Police sources said the attack in the southern province of Minya was the first by suspected members of the outlawed Gamaa Islamya militant group since the massacre of 58 foreign tourists and four Egyptians in the resort of Luxor in November.

Qatar cuts activities of Israel's trade office

DOHA (AFP) — Qatar has cut back the activities of Israel's trade office in Doha, Foreign Minister Sheikh Hamad Ben Jabr Ben Jassem Al Thani said Sunday.

"The [Middle East] peace process is currently deadlocked because of Israel, and this has pushed us to adopt a stand which is in keeping with that of Israel," he told the official news agency QNA.

"We have put a halt to steps to open a [commercial] office in Israel, and we have reduced the activities of the Israeli office in Doha," he said, without going into details.

"We have frozen all relations with Israel over the last year because we have felt that the Israeli government is playing for time," said Sheikh Hamad.

Qatar and Oman are the only Gulf Arab countries to have set up commercial ties with the Jewish state, which opened trade offices in Doha and Muscat in 1996 under former Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres.

But relations have cooled since right-wing leader Benyamin Netanyahu defeated Mr. Peres in 1996 elections and adopted a hard line on the peace process.

A meeting of Islamic foreign ministers in Doha last week called for Muslim countries looking to set up ties with Israel "to reconsider these relations, including closing diplomatic offices and missions."

Annan holds 'useful' talks with Syria

DAMASCUS (R) — U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan met Syrian President Hafez Al Assad Sunday to discuss how to revive the Syrian-Israeli peace talks which broke off two years ago.

Presidential spokesman Joubran Kourieh said Syrian Foreign Minister Farouq Al Sharaa was present at the meeting at the presidential palace.

Mr. Annan said that he held "useful" talks with Mr. Sharaa earlier in the day on the implementation of U.N. Security Council Resolution 425 calling for Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon.

"We talked about Resolution 425. I will go to Israel where I will be able to discuss this issue in detail," Mr. Annan said after the talks with Mr. Sharaa.

A Syrian foreign ministry spokesman said talks dealt with ways of "rescuing the peace process which stopped due to the anti-peace policies of the Israeli government."

Mr. Annan, who is touring the region to seek ways of advancing the Middle East peace process, arrived in Damascus on Saturday from Lebanon.

He has visited Egypt and Jordan and will go to the Palestinian self-ruled areas and Israel.

Speaking at Al Fawar camp to members of the U.N. Disengagement and Observation Force (UNDOF), which separates Syrian and Israeli troops, Mr. Annan said:

"For almost 25 years, you have kept the peace and maintained stability on one of the most volatile fault lines in the world. The United Nations is in your debt."

The 1,030-strong UNDOF, grouping troops from Austria, Poland and Japan, was deployed in the Golan in 1974 after the 1973 Middle East war.

"As a force patrolling the border between Israel and Syria and providing humanitarian and other services, you perform a dual service — keeping the peace and preventing instability," Mr. Annan said.

"With your continued service and excellence in the maintenance of peace, the Middle East is kept safe for a future of true reconciliation and partnership. Until that time, the world needs you as much as ever."

After reviewing a guard of honour, Mr. Annan laid a wreath at a memorial site for U.N. soldiers killed in the area. U.N. officials said 49 troops have been killed on both sides of the border since 1974.

Syria has held sporadic peace talks with Israel since 1991 but the negotiations, which broke off in early 1996, stalled over future ties and the fate of the Golan, captured by Israel in 1967.

Rival Kurdish factions exchange prisoners in northern Iraq

DUBAI (AFP) — Rival Kurdish factions in northern Iraq have exchanged prisoners, in a gesture to mark the Kurdish New Year of Newroz, one of the two parties announced Sunday.

The Kurdish Democratic Party (KDP), in a statement sent to AFP, said it released 75 members of its rival, the Patriotic Union of Kurdistan (PUK).

The PUK freed 67 KDP prisoners, the statement said, "as part of the dialogue underway between the two parties and on the occasion of the Newroz."

The two factions decided last month to release prisoners and strengthen a ceasefire which has been in effect since December.

They have clashed since 1993, at the cost of around 3,000 lives, after having shared control of northern Iraq for two years since the aftermath of Iraq's defeat in the 1991 Gulf War.

On Saturday, Baghdad urged the KDP and PUK to attend a national reconciliation meeting in the Iraqi capital.

Israel wants U.N. to help stage Lebanon withdrawal

Combined agency dispatches

A SENIOR Israeli official said Sunday that the United Nations would have a major role to play in the withdrawal of Israeli troops from south Lebanon.

"The U.N. will be without doubt involved, in one way or another, in the solution to the Lebanese-Israeli conflict," said the coordinator of Israeli affairs in Lebanon, Uri Lubrani.

"We are impatient to promote our initiative which will allow the withdrawal of our troops from south Lebanon and allow us to find security arrangements to protect us from terrorism," he told AFP.

"But it goes without saying that we will have to be patient as this conflict has been going on for 20 years," added Mr. Lubrani, speaking ahead of U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan's visit to Israel on Tuesday.

Israeli Defence Minister Yitzhak Mordechai will ask both the United Nations and the United States to help win Syrian support for an Israeli withdrawal from south Lebanon, a daily reported Sunday.

Syria, a major powerbroker with 30,000 troops in Lebanon, would be crucial to any security arrangements, but Damascus has rejected the Israeli proposal.

Meanwhile, Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu insisted Sunday that Israel would not agree to resume peace talks with Syria at the point at which they were broken off, his office said.

"There is no truth to the report that Israel agreed to resume the negotiations with Syria at the point at which they were stopped," Mr. Netanyahu told a cabinet meeting Sunday, according to the minutes.

"We said to Syria that it can raise any proposal in the negotiations but we won't agree to renew the talks at the point they broke off," Mr. Netanyahu added.

Mr. Netanyahu was denying an Israeli television report over the weekend that his government had agreed in principle to withdraw from the Golan Heights.

Israel remains stubborn ahead of new U.S. mediation

TEL AVIV (R) — Israel was defiant on Sunday ahead of a fresh U.S. effort to revive Middle East peacemaking, saying Washington could not dictate terms for breaking the deadlock.

An Israeli official announced U.S. envoy Dennis Ross would arrive by the end of the week in what analysts said could be a final thrust of quiet diplomacy before Washington turned up the heat on both sides by going public with its peace plan.

The United States, according to Israeli political sources, wants Israel to cede another 13 per cent of the West Bank in return for steps by the Palestinian National Authority (PNA) to stop attacks by activists.

The withdrawal is outlined in an Israeli-Palestinian peace deal signed last year but Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu has said Israel alone would determine how much land to hand over to the Palestinians.

"Reports about a 13 per cent withdrawal are unacceptable," said a government statement issued after Sunday's weekly cabinet meeting.

Officials speaking after the meeting said Washington would be breaking promises by announcing what it viewed as an appropriate pullback.

"We expect the United States to stick to its...promises that Israel will be the one to set the redeployment in Judea and Samaria [the West Bank]," the statement said.

The Israeli cabinet statement said Mr. Netanyahu had spoken to U.S. President Bill Clinton in recent days. Israel newspapers said Mr. Netanyahu pressed Mr. Clinton not to go public with the U.S. initiative.

"If this Ross mission fails, I think that the Americans will finally have to make up their minds if to present their proposals publicly...and to move away from low-key diplomacy," said political analyst Chemi Shalev of the Maariv newspaper.

Israeli cabinet ministers have said nine per cent of the land was the most Israel would hand over. Palestinians demand a 30 per cent withdrawal and accuse Mr. Netanyahu of using security as an excuse to renege on peace deals.

Israel is concerned it would be isolated politically if it rejected an initiative put forward by Washington, especially if Palestinians accept the plan, the Yedioth Ahronoth daily said.

It said Mr. Clinton agreed to delay publication of the plan at least until Mr. Ross meets Israeli and Palestinian officials in the region.

"Ross will arrive at the end of the week in order to examine different possibilities of how to advance the negotiations with the Palestinians," Mr. Netanyahu's spokesman Shai Bazak told reporters.

U.S. Secretary of State Madeleine Albright telephoned Palestinian President Yasser Arafat on Saturday and briefed him on U.S. mediation efforts, an adviser to Mr. Arafat said.

BEFORE IT'S OPEN FOR TRAFFIC: A team of catering company workers Saturday near the end of their mammoth task of setting lunch places for some 15,000 guests along Lisbon's newest — and Europe's longest — bridge, in preparation for the luncheon event which is expected to result in an entry into the Guinness Book of Records for the world's longest table, beating the previous record by some five kilometres. The bridge will be officially opened to traffic on March 29 and is 17.5 kilometres (AFP photo)

Annan, Turkish-Cypriot leader to meet this week for talks on Cyprus

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkish-Cypriot leader Rauf Denktash will meet with U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan in Geneva on March 27 to discuss the Cyprus question, Mr. Denktash's office announced Sunday.

The date and place of the planned meeting were decided during last week's talks in Cyprus with the U.N. special envoy for the divided Mediterranean island, Diego Cordovez, Mr. Denktash's office said in a statement carried by the Turkish-Cypriot TAK news agency.

The meeting would follow failed efforts by Mr. Cordovez to re-launch intercommunal talks between Mr. Denktash and Cypriot President Glafcos Clerides, a Greek Cypriot.

"For the time being it is not possible to resume the negotiations," Mr. Cordovez told reporters in Nicosia on Sunday after repeated talks with the two Cypriot leaders.

"This creates a very serious problem for the [U.N.] Secretary General," Mr. Cordovez said.

He did not blame either side for the impasse, but said that Mr. Denktash continued to refuse to hold further U.N.-sponsored peace talks unless his breakaway Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus (TRNC) is recognised.

"We need guidance from the Security Council on this issue," the envoy added.

Mr. Cordovez, who has been in Cyprus since Wednesday in an effort to restart talks to reunite the island under a U.N. plan to establish a bi-zonal, bi-communal federation, was scheduled to leave Sunday for visits to Athens and then Ankara.

The TRNC, set up in 1983, is recognised only by Ankara.

Cyprus has been divided since 1974 when Turkish troops occupied its northern third in response to a coup in Nicosia aimed at uniting the Cyprus with Greece.

Most of the Greek-Cypriot population of the north then moved south and Turkish Cypriots in the south went north.

ANNAN IN DAMASCUS: U.N. Secretary Géneral Kofi Annan and his wife Nane visit the old part of Damascus on Sunday. Mr. Annan is in Syria as part of a regional tour to discuss how to further the Middle East peace process (Reuters photo)

Palestinian prisoners want Annan to visit jail

BETHLEHEM (AFP) — Palestinian prisoners held in a jail in southern Israel have written to U.N. chief Kofi Annan asking him to visit them during his visit to the Jewish state this week.

"It is important for the secretary general of the United Nations to see for himself the violations of international law for which Israel is responsible," said the detainees in a letter released Sunday.

The letter from the detainees in Nafha, where around 650 Palestinians are held, accused the Israeli authorities of carrying out "torture" and "illegal medical experiments."

It also condemned Israel's use of administrative detention against Palestinians as a measure which "violates all human rights." Around 3,000 Palestinians are detained in Israeli jails.

Mr. Annan is due in Gaza for talks with Palestinian President Yasser Arafat on Monday, and in Israel on Tuesday as part of a Middle East tour that has already taken him to Jordan, Egypt, Lebanon and Syria.

Egypt says worried about Turkish-Israeli ties

CAIRO (R) — Egyptian President Hosni Mubarak met visiting Turkish Foreign Minister Ismail Cem on Sunday and discussed relations soured by Arab concerns over Ankara's growing military ties with Israel, official sources said.

Mr. Cem said in a brief statement to reporters that he had had "frank and constructive" talks with Mr. Mubarak.

Egyptian Foreign Minister Amr Musa, who met his Turkish counterpart on Saturday night, said that during the meeting he expressed Cairo's concern over growing military ties between Turkey and Israel. They signed a defence pact in 1996.

Mr. Mubarak and other Arab leaders have criticised joint naval exercises in east Mediterranean by Turkey, Israel and the United States, seeing them as directed against Syria.

"What we are talking about is not normal relations between Turkey and Israel. We are talking about steps taken in the strategic or military framework that may affect regional stability," Mr. Musa told a joint news conference after his Saturday talks with Mr. Cem.

"Egypt is following very closely all these developments, which can... affect future ties in the region," he added.

Mr. Musa said Mr. Cem assured Egypt that Turkey was not moving towards forging a strategic alliance with Israel.

"That's fine if it is true... We have no reason, intention or justification to reject what the Turkish foreign minister is saying," he added.

Mr. Musa said Turkey and Egypt were studying the creation of a free-trade zone and the conclusion of an investment protection agreement.

The two ministers agreed to hold regular consultations and senior officials from both countries will meet every six months, while their foreign ministers will meet once a year.

Mr. Cem is due to leave Cairo on Monday after a three-day visit.

Israel to offer amnesty to 800 criminals on 50th anniversary

TEL AVIV (AFP) — Israeli President Ezer Weizman will offer amnesty to 800 criminals charged with a variety of offences as part of the celebrations for Israel's 50th anniversary, a special government committee decided Sunday.

"The committee will recommend within 30 days to the president the stipulations for granting personal amnesty on the occasion of Israel's 50th anniversary," Justice Minister Tzahi Hanegbi told Israel Radio.

Presidential, judicial, police, army and prison representatives on the committee decided all criminals will be eligible for pardon, including those accused of security offences, murder, rape and white-collar crimes.

"There is no doubt the 50th anniversary jubilee celebrations call on us to be more sympathetic and to broaden our hearts," Mr. Weizman told reporters. "How exactly we will do this has not been decided yet."

The president later added that 800 criminals will be pardoned, the radio said.

Mr. Weizman said a proposal for a general amnesty had not been accepted and the individual pardons would be granted on a case-by-case basis.

Israeli Arab MK planning solidarity trip to Iraq

TEL AVIV (AP) — An Israeli-Arab lawmaker said Sunday that he is planning a trip to Baghdad to express support for the Iraqi leadership.

"The aim of the visit would be to explain the position of the Arabs in Israel, who support Iraq as it faces hardship and American oppression," said Talab Sana, who said he wants to take about 10 Israeli Arabs to Iraq next month.

Asked if he would be representing Israel, Mr. Sana said: "We would be representing the Arab people in Israel." Mr. Sana said the visit has been welcomed by the Iraqi foreign ministry, but could be blocked by the Israeli government.

"Israeli officials are asking: How can Arab citizens from Israel, with seats in the Israeli Knesset, express solidarity with Iraq, which fired Scud missiles at Israel?" Mr. Sana said.

Iraq fired 39 Scud missiles at Israel during the 1991 Gulf war, damaging thousands of homes and killing several.

Mr. Sana, who comes from an Arab party that has four seats in the Israeli Knesset, headed the first delegation of Israeli Arabs to Syria two years ago.

Yemeni president contacts Saudi Arabia on border dispute

RIYADH (AFP) — Yemeni President Ali Abdullah Saleh has sent Saudi Arabia a message on their longstanding border dispute, the official news agency SPA reported Sunday.

The secretary general of Yemen's presidential office, General Abdullah Al Bashiri, delivered the message to Saudi Defence Minister Prince Sultan Ben Abdul Aziz late Saturday.

The message "falls within the framework of the continuous contacts between the two brotherly countries aimed at completing a demarcation of the border," SPA said.

Negotiations since 1995 have so far failed to reach a breakthrough, and deadly border incidents took place last November.

In December, Mr. Saleh proposed a break in the negotiations and said that Saudi Arabia was not yet ready to settle the issue, but Riyadh turned down the proposal.

After clashes in December 1994 and January 1995, the two countries agreed to normalise relations and work to demarcate the 2,500-kilometre border, while Sanaa dropped longstanding claims to three provinces.

Turkish army kills 15 Kurdish rebels

DIYARBAKIR (AFP) — Turkish troops have killed 15 separatist Kurdish rebels in two separate clashes in southern parts of the country, government officials said Sunday.

In one incident, eight members of the outlawed Kurdish Labour Party (PKK) and two soldiers were killed in a shoot-out Saturday in a mountainous area of southern Osmaniye province near the Syrian border.

Provincial Governor Umit Karahan told the state-run Anatolian news agency that a military campaign to root out the rebels was continuing in the area.

A separate clash Saturday in the southeastern province of Sirnak on the Iraqi and Syrian borders, left seven PKK rebels dead. There were no reports of any military casualties.

The fighting came a few days after the Turkish army wrapped up a four-day spring campaign against the PKK in the mountains of Sirnak, which military officials said resulted in the death of 55 PKK members and six soldiers.

Turkish government officials said Saturday that a top PKK commander had recently surrendered to an Iraqi Kurdish group cooperating with Turkey in neighbouring northern Iraq.

Palestinian Islamist leader Tamimi laid to rest in Amman

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — As'ad Bayoud Tamimi, leader of the Palestinian group Al Jihad Al Islamiya Beit Al Maqdis, or Islamic Jihad-Jerusalem, was laid to rest yesterday in Amman following the Israeli government's refusal to allow him to be buried in his native town of Hebron, his son said Sunday.

Tamimi, 72, died Saturday night of kidney failure at a local hospital, his son Tareq told the Jordan Times.

He added that Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat called the family three times following his father's death and said he made unsuccessful attempts to convince Israel to allow Tamimi to be buried in Hebron.

Several Jordanian and Palestinian political figures attended the funeral, including members of the Muslim Brotherhood.

Tamimi was a graduate of Al Azhar University in Egypt, where he received a degree in Islamic studies.

In 1957, Tamimi helped form the hardline Hizb Al Tahrir (Liberation Party), along with Taqi Al Dine Nabhani and former Awqaf Minister Abdul Aziz Khayyat.

He was dismissed from the party following a row with his colleagues over his support for participation in Jordanian parliamentary elections.

Tamimi was the imam of Al Aqsa Mosque until the 1967 occupation of Jerusalem by Israel, which deported him to Jordan.

Later, he was appointed as head of the Aqsa Department at the Ministry of Awqaf in Jordan until his retirement.

In 1978, he, along with Ibrahim Sarbal and Fathi Shiqaqi, established his group, which claimed responsibility for several attacks against Israel.

In 1986, Islamic Jihad-Jerusalem splintered, and Shiqaqi went on to establish his own faction, Islamic Jihad, which was responsible for several suicide attacks against Israelis. Shiqaqi was later assassinated in Malta in October 1996.

Throughout his career, Tamimi maintained good relations with President Arafat, who in early 1990's began giving millions of dollars to Tamimi's group and allowed them to obtain several seats in the Palestinian National Council, the parliament-in-exile.

In 1996, his group won four out of 80 seats in the first ever elections for the Palestinian Legislative Council.

Many believed that Mr. Arafat's support for Tamimi was aimed at undermining Hamas, which began drawing support among Palestinians following the beginning of the intifada.

Following the Iranian revolution, Tamimi met in Tehran with the late Iranian spiritual leader, Ayatollah Ruhollah Khomeini.

Tamimi was the first non-Iraqi politician to visit President Saddam Hussein's eldest son Uday following a foiled attempt on his life in 1997.

He repeatedly met with President Saddam following the 1991 Gulf war, as well as Libyan leader Mou'amar Qadhafi.

Tamimi also wrote a book entitled "The Demise of Israel Is An Inevitable Koranic Necessity," in which he predicted the elimination of the Jewish state.

JORDAN TIMES DAILY GUIDE AND CALENDAR

JORDAN TELEVISION
Tel. 773111-19

PROGRAMME TWO

16:10 The World of Peter the Rabbit and Friends
16:30 .....French Programmes
18:00 .....Riding High
18:30 .....Drama — Neighbours
19:00 ..... Le Journal
19:15 Science Magazine — De Cause Acffch
19:30 .....News Headlines
19:35 Comedy — Hope and Gloria
20:00 Documentary — Perspective
20:30 The American Chart Show
21:10 .....Drama —Marker
22:00 .....News in English
22:30 ..Drama — Law and Order
23:10 .....Baywatch Nights
23:30 .....End of T.X.

PRAYER TIMES

04:15.....Fajr
05:32 ..... (Sunrise) Duha
11:42.....Dhuhr
15:10.....'Asr
17:52.....Maghreb
19:10.....'Isha

CHURCHES

St. Mary of Nazareth Church Sweifieh, Tel. 5920740
Assemblies of God Church Tel. 4632785
St. Joseph Church Tel. 4624590
Terra Sancta Church Tel. 4622366
Anglican Church Tel. 4624853/4624811.
***St. Afrem Syrian Orthodox* Church** Tel. 771751.
Amman International Church Tel. 865897
German-speaking Evangelical Congregation Tel. 5688404
The Evangelical Local Church in Amman Tel. 811295
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints Tel. 4654932
St. John the Baptist at De la Salle College Tel. 5661757
Church of the Annunciation Tel. 4637440
Greek Orthodox Church Tel. 4623541
Church of Presentation, Sweifieh Tel. 5920146
The Uniate Catholic Church Tel. 4624757
The English-Language Catholic Parish Tel. 4614190
Evangelical Free Church Tel. 892679
The Baptist Church Tel. 4628052
The Armenian Catholic Church 771331

WEATHER

Bulletin supplied by the Department of Meteorology

Sunny and warm weather conditions will prevail during the day, becoming partly cloudy in the afternoon with a chance of scattered showers in the northern parts of the Kingdom. Winds will be westerly moderate to active. In Aqaba, it will be sunny, winds northerly moderate, and seas calm.

Min./Max. temp.
Amman.....05/16
Aqaba.....11/24
Deserts.....04/18
Jordan Valley.....09/22

Yesterday's high temperatures: Amman 17, Aqaba 24. Humidity readings: Amman 26 per cent, Aqaba 25 per cent.

USEFUL TELEPHONE NUMBERS

NIGHT DUTY

AMMAN:
Dr. Mazen Nbali 830435
Dr. Fayez Dabbas 759155
Dr. Adnan Zaghloul 898140
Dr. Fakher Bilbeisi 5522235
Firas pharmacy 5661912
Ferdows pharmacy 778336
Al Asema pharmacy 4637055
Nairoukh pharmacy 4623672
Al Salam pharmacy 4636730
Yaccub pharmacy 4644945
Shmeisani pharmacy 4637660
Najib pharmacy 847632

IRBID:
Dr. Ahmad Qanu 281484
Al Qods pharmacy .....(—)
ZARQA:
Dr. Zuhour Al Qadi 906606
Khalifeh pharmacy 985417

EMERGENCIES

Food Control Centre.....4637111
Civil Defence Department —5661111
Civil Defence Immediate Rescue 4630341
Civil Defence Emergency.....199
Rescue Police 192, 4621111, 4637777
Fire Brigade.....4617101
Blood Bank.....775121
Highway Police.....843402
Traffic Police.....896390
Public Security Dept.....4630321
Hotel Complaints.....5605800
Price Complaints.....5661176
Water & Sewerage Complaints ...897467
Amman Municipality Complaints 787111
Telephone Information (directory assistance) 121
Overseas Calls 010230
Central Amman Telephone Repairs 4623101
Abdali Tel. Repairs.....5661101
Jordan Television 773111
Radio Jordan 774111
Water Authority 5680100
J. Electricity Authority 815615
Electric Power Co.... 4636381
RJ Flight Information....44-53200
Queen Alia Intl. Airport 44-53200

HOSPITALS

AMMAN:
The Arab Centre for Heart and Special Surgery 5921199
The Islamic Abdli 56661317
Hussein Medical Centre Tel. 836813, 856856
Luzmila 4630195
Khalidi Maternity.....464428 1/6
Akileh Maternity.....464224 1/2
Jabal Amman Maternity 4642362
Malhas, J. Amman. 4636140
Palestine, Shmeisani 5607071
Shmeisani Hospital 5669131
University Hospital 845845
Al-Mushar Hospital ..56672279
Al-Ahli, Abdali 56641646
Italian, Al-Muhajreen ...77710173
Al-Bashir.....775111/26
Army, Marka 891611/15
Queen Alia Hospital ...5602340/50
Amal Hospital 5674155
ZARQA:
Zarqa Govt. Hospital 09/983323
Zarqa National Hospital 09/900560
Ibn Sina Hospital 09/986732
Al Hikma Modern Hospital 09/99099
IRBID:
Princess Basma Hospital 02/275555
Greek Catholic Hospital 02/272275
Ibn Al Nafees Hospital 02/247100

AQABA:
Princess Haya Hospital 03/314111

FOR THE TRAVELLER

QUEEN ALIA INTERNATIONAL AIRPORT

This information is supplied by Royal Jordanian (RJ) information department at the Queen Alia International Airport Tel. (44)53200-5, where it should always be verified. Information on other flights can be supplied on phone 44 (52700).

ARRIVALS

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
07:15 .....Sanaa (RJ)
08:25 .....Damascus (RJ)
08:35 .....Jeddah (RJ)
09:15 .....New Delhi (RJ)
09:50 .....Dubai, Abu Dhabi (RJ)
10:05 .....Beirut (RJ)
16:20 .....Cairo (RJ)
16:25 .....London (RJ)
16:45 New York, Amsterdam (RJ)
18:05 .....Kuwait (RJ)
18:35 .....Casablanca, Tunis (RJ)
19:00 .....Bangkok (RJ)
02:00 .....Jeddah (add) (RJ)
02:50 Jakarta, Kuala Lumpur (RJ)

Other Flights
04:15 .....London (BA)
09:15 .....Cairo (MS)
12:00 .....Khartoum (SD)
13:25 .....Bahrain (GF)
14:30 .....Doha (QR)
15:05 .....Vienna (OS)
16:00 .....Dubai (EK)
18:00 .....Istanbul (SD)
20:00 .....Tel Aviv (LY)
21:10 ....Paris, Damascus (AF)
22:30 .....Athens (OA)
01:25 .....Amsterdam (KL)

Royal Wings (RW)
06:05 .....Tel Aviv (RW)
07:25 .....Amman (QAIA) (RW)
07:15 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
09:50 ..... Aqaba (RW)
11:10 .....Amman (QAIA) (RW)
12:00 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
21:20 ..... Aqaba (RW)
22:50 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)

DEPARTURES

Royal Jordanian (RJ) Flights
06:20 .....Beirut (RJ)
10:30.... Frankfurt, London (RJ)
11:00 Amsterdam, Chicago (RJ)
12:05 ..... Kuwait (RJ)
12:30 .....Cairo (RJ)
16:00 .....Jeddah (add) (RJ)
20:15 .....Bahrain, Doha (RJ)
20:40 .....Damascus (RJ)
20:45 .....Abu Dhabi (RJ)
21:15 .....Dubai, Muscat (RJ)
22:45 ..... Sanaa (RJ)

Other Flights
06:00 .....Istanbul (TK)
08:25 .....London (BA)
10:30 .....Al 'Arish (PF)
10:30 .....Cairo (MS)
13:20 .....Istanbul (SD)
14:15 .....Bahrain (GF)
15:50 .....Doha (QR)
15:50 .....Vienna (OS)
17:00 ..... Damascus, Dubai (EK)
19:00 .....Khartoum (SD)
21:20 .....Tel Aviv (LY)
23:53 .....Damascus, Paris (AF)
02:25 .....Amsterdam (KL)
03:00 .....Athens (OA)

Royal Wings (RW)
05:30 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
06:50 .....Tel Aviv (RW)
07:55 ..... Amman (QAIA) (RW)
08:50 Amman (Marka Airport) (RW)
10:20 .....Aqaba (RW)
11:40 .....Amman (QAIA) (RW)
20:30 .....Amman (QAIA) (RW)
21:50 .....Aqaba (RW)

Princess Basma thanks Ramadan charity campaign participants

AMMAN (Petra) — HRH Princess Basma on Sunday expressed her appreciation of the Jordanian organisations and individuals who took part in the 1998 Ramadan Charity Campaign to raise funds and in-kind contributions for the needy.

Addressing a ceremony held at the Royal Cultural Centre to honour the participants, Princess Basma reviewed the campaign's achievements since its inception in 1991 when, she said, the economic recession affecting the country began to make itself felt among the poor.

"The campaign aims at alleviating the suffering of the poor and is in line with the message of the Queen Alia Fund for Social Development (QAF), which serves as a national non-governmental institution and caters to the sublime meanings of the Holy Month of Ramadan and the principle of social solidarity," said the Princess.

"Since 1991, the campaign has assumed new humanitarian dimensions, as it is targeting needy families, offering prompt aid and enabling them to become self-reliant by helping them earn a steady income," Princess Basma added.

She said the campaign has become a nationwide effort designed to raise funds and in-kind donations to poor families in urban, rural and badia regions.

"The campaign's diverse programmes aim at meeting the growing needs of poor families, something which necessitated the involvement of all public sectors, [thus] embodying the principle of social solidarity," she said.

Princess Basma stated that the campaign's assistance has been instrumental in changing the lives of many poor people, due to the special efforts of the campaign's higher committee in the various regions.

In his address, Hassan Usta, higher committee rapporteur, noted that the campaign provided not only cash and in-kind assistance to the poor but also financed income-generating projects.

He added that the committee has now worked out a plan for year round fundraising with the purpose of collecting aid that can be distributed regularly.

According to the committee statistics, 20 per cent of the Jordanian people, or 48,000 families, live under the poverty line. Fifty per cent of this number live in abject poverty.

The audience watched a documentary on the charity campaign's activities since 1991, which showed that the poverty rate has been on the rise continually in view of the economic recession that has been affecting the country.

The committee said 33,000 families have benefited from direct aid or financing of income-generating projects, in addition to medical equipment such as hearing aids, wheelchairs and other medical equipment.

The assistance reached the needy via 50 centres around the country, they added.

Princess Basma presented the campaign's shields to representatives of institutions, scouts and individuals who played a key role in the campaign.

She also distributed college scholarships to 103 poor students and grants to 131 families to help them carry out income-generating projects.

MINISTER RECEIVES TUNISIAN DELEGATION: Minister of Education and Higher Education Mohammad Hamdan on Sunday receives a Tunisian delegation representing teachers of the Arab School in Tunis. Dr. Hamdan briefed the delegation on the ministry's efforts to upgrade the skills of Jordanian teachers by training them in the new curricula (Petra photo)

Campaign immunises over 700,000 children against polio — ministry

AMMAN (J.T.) — The Ministry of Health announced Sunday that a total of 724,114 children were vaccinated in the first phase of the nationwide polio immunisation campaign conducted this month.

Ministry Secretary General Adnan Abbas said that while the campaign originally targeted children up to five years of age, older children were also vaccinated, resulting in coverage rates exceeding 100 per cent in some cases.

Dr. Abbas said vaccination coverage reached 92 per cent in the Amman governorate, 121 per cent in the Jerash governorate, and averaged 100 per cent in the rest of the governorates.

He said that since no documents showing age were required, many children older than five were immunised at the ministry's hospitals and health centres, as well as private sector and United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) clinics.

Noting that these children should be immunised a second time during the week-long second phase starting on April 18, Dr. Abbas expressed satisfaction with the level of cooperation by the public with health officials.

The campaign, which is designed to eradicate the disease from Jordan by the year 2000, was financed by the World Health Organisation (WHO), the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), and the Jordanian Rotary and Lions Clubs.

Ministry officials said health centres and hospitals were open from eight in the morning until four in the afternoon to ensure the success of the campaign's first phase.

No cases of polio have been reported in Jordan since 1994, but the campaign is needed until the year 2000 to guarantee that the disease will not reappear, they added.

what's going on

FILM

* "La passage" at the French Cultural Centre, Jabal Weibdeh at 6:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m.

CONCERT

* Performance by Italian duo Massimo de Bonfils (violin) and Annamaria (piano) at Romero Restaurant (including dinner) on Tuesday, March 24, at 8:00 p.m.

LECTURE

* "A Vision Into the Jordanian National Charter" by Ahmad Obeidat at Abdul Hameed Shoman Foundation, Jabal Amman at 6:00 p.m.

EXHIBITIONS

* Paintings on handmade paper at Noor Al Hussein Foundation, off Wadi Saqra St. (Tel. 569914 1/2), until April 25.

* Arab calligraphy by Iranian calligrapher 'Ain Al Din Sadeq Zadah at the University of Jordan, until March 23.

* "Colours of Life" at Books@Café (Tel. 837931/2), until March 31.

* Works by late Iraqi artist Seddiq Ahmad at Hammurabi Art Gallery, Gardens Street (Tel. 5695027), until March 29.

AN URGENT APPEAL TO FREE WORLD LEADERS

WE, SUZANNE (11) and Yasmine (9), daughters of Abdul Rahman Asa'ad Al Imam Al Husseini who is being held in a Kuwaiti jail since 1991, appeal to you to intervene with the Kuwaiti authorities to release our father. His health has been steadily deteriorating. Since his imprisonment he has developed diabetes and subsequently suffered a heart attack.

Our father, who before 1990 worked as a translator for the Kuwaiti News Agency, was forced by the Iraqi occupation forces to work for their newspaper Al Nida.

After the liberation of Kuwait in 1991, he was tried and sentenced to serve a 20-year jail term, while his superiors at Al Nida were handed only 10-year sentences. They were subsequently released following an Emiri order. Unfortunately our dad was excluded from that order since he was tried by a martial court.

We would highly appreciate it if you use your good offices with the Kuwaiti authorities to pinpoint first the unjust sentence he received from the court and to be released on equal footing with the others whose terms were cut in keeping with the Emiri order.

First convoy of pilgrims leaves for Saudi Arabia

AMMAN (Petra) — The first Jordanian pilgrims departed Sunday in a bus convoy for Saudi Arabia and were accorded a farewell ceremony attended by Sheikh Izzedin Tamimi, His Majesty King Hussein's advisor on Islamic affairs, who deputised for HRH Crown Prince Hassan, and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs Abdul Salam Abbadi.

At the ceremony, Sheikh Tamimi, who is also Chief Islamic Justice, wished the pilgrims a happy journey, saying that they represent Jordan's ambassadors to the holy land.

The pilgrims were also addressed by Dr. Abbadi, who said the Ministry of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs was keen on providing all necessary services to the pilgrims during their stay in Medina and Mecca.

The minister, who is also head of the official Jordanian mission accompanying the pilgrims on this year's haj, voiced Jordan's appreciation of Saudi Arabia's government for the facilities it is offering.

He noted that recent talks with his Saudi counterpart covered the facilities that would be placed at the disposal of the Jordanian pilgrims.

Dr. Abbadi also thanked the Saudi consulate in Amman for providing visas and the various Jordanian government departments that took part in providing facilities for the haj.

Sheikh Tamimi and Dr. Abbadi inspected the pilgrims buses' and enquired about their condition.

The rest of the Jordanian bus convoys are expected to leave for Saudi Arabia in the coming two days.

Pilgrims normally call first at Medina and then proceed to Mecca, where they take part in religious rites that are expected to peak by April 7, which marks the feast of sacrifice (Eid Al Adha).

Meanwhile, pilgrims have begun arriving in Jordan by land from Syria en route to Mecca.

Mohammad Freihat, Ramtha district governor, said the pilgrims are being accommodated at a camp near the border town of Ramtha.

Prince Abdullah meets with visiting Yugoslav sports minister

AMMAN (Petra) — His Royal Highness Prince Abdullah met Sunday with Yugoslav Sports Minister Zoran Bangulash and discussed sports cooperation between Yugoslavia and Jordan.

Prince Abdullah expressed satisfaction with the bilateral ties and said Jordan is interested in promoting these ties. The meeting was attended by Minister of Culture and Youth Talal Hassan and the Yugoslav charge d'affaires.

Earlier Sunday, Mr. Bangulash expressed his country's interest in cooperating with Jordan in sports and youth affairs.

Mr. Bangulash was speaking at a meeting with Acting Prime Minister Abdullah Ensour, Minister of Culture and Youth Talal Hassan and the Yugoslav charge d'affaires in Amman.

The two sides reviewed means of promoting bilateral cooperation in youth and sports matters and discussed the prospect of concluding an agreement between Yugoslav institutions and the Jordanian National Olympic Committee.

Dr. Ensour said Jordan was interested in cooperating with Yugoslavia, which enjoys high standards in sports, at a time when the Kingdom is preparing to host the Ninth Pan-Arab Games, due in August 1999.

He said Jordan can benefit from the Yugoslav experience in preparing and organising sports events.

The Yugoslav minister and Mr. Hassan also held a formal session of talks on bilateral cooperation in youth and sports affairs and the prospects of Jordan benefiting from Yugoslavia's experience, as well as the exchange of visits by coaches and sports teams.

Amman Municipality to host European cultural team

AMMAN (J.T.) — Prominent Arab novelist Abdul Rahman Munif, translators of his novel "Sirat Madina" (Biography of a City), and a delegation representing the European Cultural Foundation will meet for a week beginning Wednesday to exchange views with Jordanian intellectuals, publishers, translators, academicians, and press and media representatives, according to an Amman Cultural Department press release Sunday.

The European Cultural Foundation sponsors a translation and publishing programme, "Mémoires de la Méditerranée," of contemporary Arabic literary works of autobiographical nature reflecting Arab communal life. The programme also aims at promoting and enhancing cooperation between European translators and publishers and their Arab counterparts, based on agreed publishing programmes, the statement said.

"Mémoires de la Méditerranée" is run by eight European board members (correspondents) specialised in contemporary Arabic literature, with extensive experience in publishing literary book series.

They annually select two to four Arabic titles in collaboration with Arab publishers to benefit from finances offered by the European Cultural Foundation for translation and publishing purposes.

To gain translation approval, an Arabic title needs endorsement by publishers in at least three European languages for a book to be translated and published simultaneously under the "Mémoires de la Méditerranée" logo. Dr. Munif's novel on Amman, "Sirat Madina," has been published in five European languages, the announcement continued.

The visiting delegation will include the following translators: Maria Avino (Italian), Larissa Bender (German), Luis Miguel Cañada (Spanish), Eric Gaurier (French), and Samira Kawar (English).

Programme correspondents Isabella Camera d'Afflitto (Italy), Yves Gonzalez-Quijano (France), Richard Van Leeuwen (Holand), and Tetz Rooke (Sweden) will represent the programme. Odile Chenal, director of grants and programmes, will be representing the European Cultural Foundation.

In addition to a host cultural-exchange events, Greater Amman Municipality, which issued an invitation for the meeting, has also prepared a rich sightseeing tour of the country for Jordan's guests, the statement concluded.

Shbeilat's defence attorney contests state prosecutor's decision

By a Jordan Times Staff Reporter

AMMAN — The defence attorney of opposition leader Leith Shbeilat on Sunday contested a recent decision by the state prosecutor to ban newspapers from printing news related to the defendant.

Hussein Mjalli said the March 19 decision was illegal and violated the constitution, which he said guarantees freedom of expression in the Kingdom and grants newspapers the right to express their views in writing.

"In referring to the provisions of the law and article number 42, as mentioned by the state prosecutor, we do not find any text that supports this order. On the contrary, the constitution requires that the state guarantee freedom of opinion and entitles newspapers to express their views freely in writing and other means of expression," said Mr. Mjalli.

In a two-page faxed statement, Mr. Mjalli, head of the Jordanian Bar Association, said: "The decision to ban printing news pertaining to the defendant is considered an infringement on public freedoms guaranteed by the constitution and it strengthens the government's hand in suppressing freedom of the press at a time when the rights of the press should be strengthened in the search for and relaying news without any obstacles.

"It is a condition that the judiciary remain independent and neutral and enjoy immunity, without which the defence cannot perform its duty and achieve justice. It should be emphasised that the absence of such a condition transforms the judge into an adversary and subsequently, there can be no point in the defence and its mission and as a result, justice will not be served," added Mr. Mjalli.

In view of the aforesaid, Mr. Mjalli added: "The state prosecutor's decision, which has no legal grounds, should not be considered and its contents should be disregarded."

The head of the Press and Publications Department, Bilal Tal, relying on an official request from State Security Court Prosecutor General Ma'moun Khasawneh, reminded newspapers not to "run any news or information related to the case of Mr. Shbeilat."

The prosecutor charged Mr. Shbeilat on Feb. 21 with inciting riots in Ma'an a few days earlier and slandering His Majesty King Hussein.

Mr. Shbeilat, outgoing president of the Jordan Engineers Association, was arrested on Feb. 20 after returning from Ma'an. Hours later, pro-Iraqi unrest swept the city, leaving one Jordanian dead and over 25 others injured.

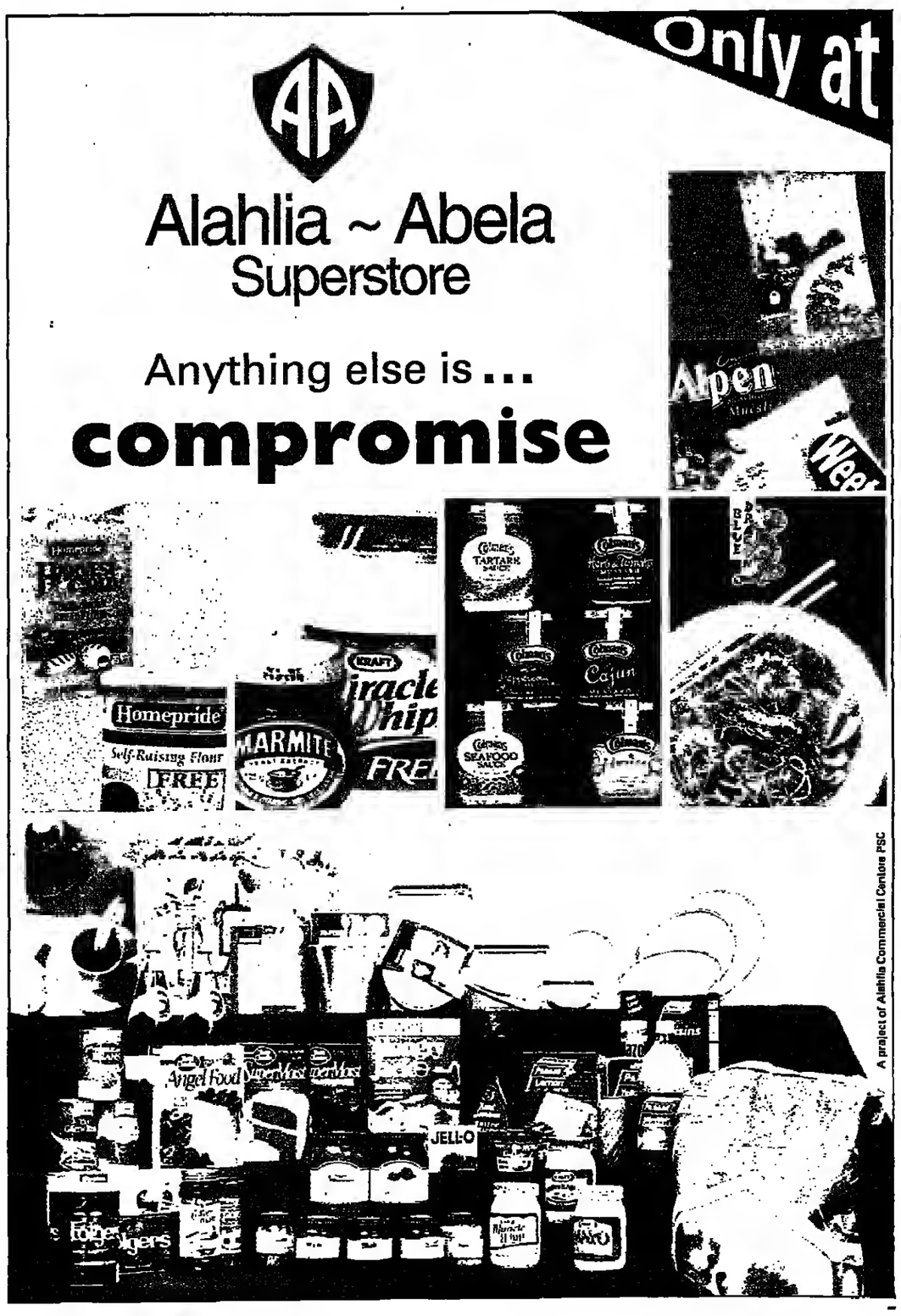
The government, which imposed a six-day curfew on Ma'an, blamed Mr. Shbeilat for inciting the unrest.

Mr. Shbeilat was pardoned by King Hussein in 1992 and 1996 after receiving prison terms ranging from three years to life imprisonment on charges of treason and lese majeste.

Mr. Mjalli is one of three attorneys who will represent Mr. Shbeilat at the trial, set to open sometime early next month. Lawyers could not give a firm date for the beginning of legal proceedings.

Najeeb Rashdan and Ahmad Obeidat, former prime minister and former head of the General Intelligence Department, will also defend Mr. Shbeilat in his third trial before the same court in less that six years.

Several local, Arab and international political parties and human rights groups have issued appeals for his release.



Two million Nigerians greet Pope for beatification mass

ONITSHA, Nigeria (AFP) — A vast crowd of about two million people greeted Pope John Paul II as he arrived Sunday in the southern Nigerian city of Onitsha in sweltering heat to celebrate a beatification mass.

The Pope's white helicopter touched down in a cloud of red dust on the runway of a never completed airport some 10 kilometres south of Onitsha, the centre of Nigerian Catholicism.

Under a sky turned ashen by the seasonal harmattan wind bearing dust from the desert, the 77-year-old Pope arrived to a cannon salute, shortly after seven other helicopters landed bearing his entourage.

Earlier Sunday, as he left the federal capital Abuja, John Paul showed signs of extreme fatigue. Using a cane, he had to stop four times before boarding the plane that took him to Enuja, where he boarded the helicopter that brought him to Onitsha.

The throng erupted in a great roar of welcome when the pontiff emerged from the helicopter and boarded the Popemobile, which bore him through the crowds waving the Vatican colours of yellow and white.

Dozens of people scrambled after the Popemobile for a better glimpse of the pontiff on the second day of his three-day pastoral visit to Africa's most populous nation.

Most had been at the runway since early in the morning to await the outdoor mass to beatify Father Cyprian Michael Iwene Tansi.

Hundreds of police were deployed at the venue, where vendors offered T-shirts, hats, stickers and flags bearing the image of Tansi, a Cistercian monk who died in 1964.

John Paul took his place under a straw panoply on the podium, flanked by Nigerian Catholic bishops wearing white robes emblazoned with images of the Pope and Tansi, before opening the mass with a brief prayer.

Father Tansi's beatification will mark the first ever of a west African.

Saturday the pope appealed to Nigeria's military regime to grant clemency to 60 political detainees from a list compiled by the Civil Liberties Organisation, a prominent Lagos-based human rights group.

He met for 20 minutes with Nigeria's strongman, General Sani Abacha, during which he was thought to have discussed the military regime's human rights record which led to Nigeria's 1995 suspension from the Commonwealth.

Hopes of a result from the pontiff's encounter with Gen. Abacha have increased in the light of his recent visit to Havana, which led to the liberation of several hundred Cuban political detainees.

In welcoming the Pope, Gen. Abacha, in power since 1993, said the Pope's visit came at a critical point in Nigeria's transition to democracy and reiterated his pledge to hand over to a democratically elected president on Oct. 1 following elections on Aug. 1.

The Pope was scheduled to return to the capital later Sunday to meet Muslim leaders, who represent about half of Nigeria's population, before celebrating his last mass Monday and meeting Nigerian bishops.

Two elderly ethnic Albanians cast their votes at a polling station in Hajvalia village, 10 km east of Pristina, the capital of Serbia's troubled province of Kosovo for a president and a parliament (Reuters photo)

Ethnic Albanians begin voting in Kosovo

PRISTINA, Yugoslavia (AFP) — Ethnic Albanians in the Serbian province of Kosovo began voting Sunday in underground elections aimed at sending a defiant message to the authorities in Belgrade.

Some 1.1 million people are registered to vote in the polls, regarded as illegal by Belgrade, to elect a president and 130 deputies to sit in the parliament of the self-proclaimed Kosovo Republic.

Among those casting their ballots early in the day was incumbent "president" Ibrahim Rugova, leader of the ethnic Albanian population in Kosovo.

"These elections are very important for our people, for our independence and for Kosovo's legitimacy and democracy," said Mr. Rugova, the only candidate for president, a position he has held since the first underground polls in 1992.

A total of 95 polling stations, in private houses and offices belonging to Albanians, opened at 7:00 a.m. (0600 GMT) and were due to close at 7:00 p.m. (1800 GMT).

Some 10 political parties, together with three associations, are contesting the election for 130 "parliamentary" seats.

A congressional delegation from the United States had sought to travel to the province to oversee the vote but Belgrade authorities refused to grant them visas.

The polls are being held at a time when Kosovo, a mountainous province in the south of Serbia with 90 per cent ethnic Albanians, is reeling from the most serious political crisis since Belgrade revoked its autonomous status in 1989.

Still the most popular politician among the 1.8 million Albanians in Kosovo, Mr. Rugova, 53, has remained faithful to his policy of achieving independence by peaceful means and resistance to the regime of Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic.

For Mr. Rugova, head of the biggest Albanian party, the Kosovo Democratic League (LDK), the polls will be a "referendum for an independent Kosovo republic."

Organisers of the election have taken steps to counter any attempt at intervention by Serbian police, with substitute polling booths ready to open should others be forced to close down.

"We have the ability to open a replacement booth anywhere in 15 minutes," said Enver Maloku, who works at the LDK information centre.

Belgrade has showed surprising discretion regarding the vote, obviously satisfied with its rejection by the Albanian hardliners, and comforted by the position of Western countries against independence for Kosovo.

The only reported intervention reported so far occurred when Serb police seized 100,000 ballot sheets from a bus travelling between Pristina and the southern town of Prizren.

The impoverished Serbian province has been hit by a wave of increasing violence since the start of this month, after the Serbian security forces launched an action against alleged "terrorists" in the central Drenica region, in which around 80 people were killed.

N. Korea steps up anti-U.S. campaign after impasse in peace talks

SEOUL (AFP) — North Korea Sunday stepped up an anti-U.S. campaign after an acrimonious end to four-party peace talks in Geneva, accusing Washington of seeking a war "behind the scene of dialogue."

The Korean Central News Agency (KCNA) carried an article by Pyongyang's official Rodong newspaper, blasting Washington for "unhesitatingly taking arbitrary and high-handed military actions" on the Korean Peninsula and elsewhere.

"The situation makes us suspect that the 'four-way talks' the United States is describing as peace talks are only aimed at camouflaging its intention to stifle the DPRK (North Korea) by military force.

"We are ready for both dialogue and war. If the United States persistently seeks a war behind the scene of dialogue, we will unhesitatingly cope with it," it said in a separate dispatch late Saturday.

KCNA warned that a "time-bomb situation" had persisted on the Korean Peninsula because of "ill-boding military manoeuvres" staged behind the curtain of U.S.-North Korean contacts and four-way peace talks.

The warning followed an impasse in four-way peace talks — involving North and South Korea, the United States and China — which ended in Geneva Saturday with no date set for a resumption and a damaging rift over the issue of U.S. troop withdrawals.

Seoul Sunday remained officially silent on the impasse with the only comment coming from its chief delegate in Geneva, Song Young-Shik.

"We were not able to reach a major breakthrough," Mr. Song said. But he put a positive spin on the proceedings, insisting that "modest progress" had been made. "Talks are better than no talks," he said.

Chinese delegation chief and talks Chairman Chen Jian also stressed the positive, saying the process would continue, with all sides committed to thrashing out a lasting peace.

Mr. Chen described the talks as an "inherently long and difficult process," and said it was "important that we have begun it and intend to continue" trying to replace the 1953 armistice on the peninsula with a durable peace treaty.

Seoul's Korea Herald, in an editorial Saturday anticipating the virtual breakdown over the agenda caused by the North's insistence on discussing a U.S. troop withdrawal from South Korea, warned against over optimism.

"The only positive sign has been the northern representatives' reluctant consent to keep talking with no fixed agenda," the Herald said.

The editorial concluded that while Seoul should not, in the interests of peace and stability, "shy away from contacts or negotiations with Pyongyang — it must not harbour any unrealistic expectations concerning such dealings."

"Dealing with the unpredictable North requires caution, cold calculation and preparedness for the worst," it added.

In Geneva Saturday the North's chief delegate Kim Kye-Gwan said: "The withdrawal of U.S. troops and conclusion of a peace treaty (between the U.S. and North Korea), are essential for the four-party peace talks."

Asked if the North would attend future negotiations, he said: "It's up to the U.S." and accused Washington of reneging on a previous agreement to allow it to raise the withdrawal issue, and that of a bilateral peace treaty with the United States, at the Geneva talks.

However China's Chen Jian, chairperson of the talks, said the date for the third round of talks would be discussed "through proper channels."

"Sooner or later we will agree on the time of the next session," he said.

Exiled Cambodian cabinet says pardon is the first step to peace

BANGKOK (AFP) — The royal pardon for Cambodia's deposed co-Premier Prince Norodom Ranariddh is the first step towards free and fair elections in the strife-torn country, the prince's cabinet in exile said Sunday.

A spokesman for the prince's cabinet in exile here said the ousted first prime minister welcomed the pardon as a vital step in the election process.

But he said the pardon did not mean the planned elections would meet the international community's expectations of fairness.

"It is too early to say whether the pardon means the elections in July will be free and fair because Hun Sen still controls everything, even the electoral commission," the official told AFP.

"This is the first step but we can't say if the elections will be free and fair. We have to be cautious."

The prince has himself made no response to the pardon granted by his father King Norodom Sihanouk, which sets the stage for his participation in July's scheduled elections. He is understood to be returning to Bangkok Sunday night after a trip to Singapore.

Prince Ranariddh will meet with his top aides in Bangkok Monday to decide his FUNCINPEC party's next step, including the date of his possible return to Cambodia, the official said.

"As always he never wants to respond to anything related to the trial," the FUNCINPEC spokesman told AFP.

He is expected to meet with the Japanese ambassador in Thailand, Hiroshi Ota, Monday morning, as part of a series of meetings with international diplomats.

The prince has lived in Bangkok since he was effectively deposed during fierce fighting in Phnom Penh in July last year.

King Sihanouk signed the pardon late Saturday after a personal plea from Hun Sen, erasing convictions on security charges for which Prince Ranariddh, who was tried in his absence, had received 35 years in prison. The pardon is a key element in an internationally-backed peace plan for Cambodia which is designed to allow the prince to contest the general election, the first in Cambodia since 1993.

A Thai Foreign Ministry official said the royal pardon was in line with the Japanese-led plan to ensure "free and fair" elections are held in July.

"The participation by Prince Ranariddh will be the best thing for Cambodia's political system," the official said.

"The pardon means that all parties are using the political system to solve conflicts and all the people can join in the election process."

Thai military sources said the ceasefire between the rival premier's armies in Cambodia appeared to be holding, with no signs of fresh fighting reported Sunday.

Rioters attack N. Irish police in Belfast

BELFAST (R) — Protestant rioters hurled petrol bombs at police who blocked them from a Roman Catholic area in north Belfast early Sunday, security forces in Northern Ireland said.

Police said two officers in a patrol car had to be rescued when they were "ferociously attacked" by "loyalists" who threw around 30 firebombs.

Police fired three plastic bullets to disperse the mob and made six arrests. The rioters beat up a man who was trying to protect his property.

Officers moved in to the Halliday's Road area, a frequent trouble spot bordering pro-British Protestants and pro-Irish Catholic areas, and confronted 50 loyalists headed towards the nationalist zone.

They are called loyalist because of their fierce allegiance to Britain and their opposition to minority Catholic demands for the creation of an all-Ireland state.

"This incident has all the indications of an organised and orchestrated attack on police who were attempting to protect life and property," Police Superintendent David Matchett said in a statement.

In the border town of Dundalk in the neighbouring Irish Republic Army technical experts were called in to examine a suspected bomb that may have been intended to explode in the British province. An Irish police spokesman said two men were arrested during the incident.

Irish security sources said plastic bags were found beside a vehicle and a substance in them was being examined.

Peace talks are under way in Northern Ireland but the province has been tense after bombings and killings by dissidents on both sides of the sectarian divide who oppose negotiations.

Continuity IRA, a small republican militia, made a failed bid to set off a bomb in a bank in Londonderry, the province's second city, Friday. It has been blamed for several recent town-centre bomb attacks.

Multiparty talks between most of the province's parties, including Sinn Fein, the political arm of the powerful Irish Republican Army, enter a final phase Monday.

Britain and Ireland want the parties to reach an agreement by April 9 ending decades of violence that has cost more than 3,200 lives.

Sinn Fein announced Saturday that it will return to the talks Monday after a temporary expulsion by the sponsors, Britain and Ireland, who blamed the IRA for two Northern Ireland murders in February.

Dissident says opposition parties set up in China

TAIPEI (AFP) — An exiled Chinese dissident said here Sunday that an opposition party aimed at promoting democracy in the mainland had been set up in China despite government attempts to block it.

"The Democracy and Justice Party has been established in China by a group of democracy activists," Wang Bingzhang told a press conference on his arrival here Saturday after being refused entry into Hong Kong.

"After I was expatriated to the United States, representatives have convened meetings in the mainland separately announcing the formation of the party."

Mr. Wang, 50, was detained by Hong Kong immigration authorities late Friday after arriving from Macau, the Information Centre of Human Rights and Democratic Movement in China said.

Spokesman Frank Lu said Mr. Wang's wife, who was travelling with him, was told by immigration officials her husband had been intercepted "following a request from the central (Chinese) government."

Mr. Wang, who had arrived in Hong Kong from New York Monday, was detained for several hours before being returned to Macau about 1:00 a.m. Saturday (1700 GMT Friday), Mr. Lu told AFP.

He said Mr. Wang, a U.S. citizen, flew from Macau to Taiwan Saturday to catch a flight back to New York.

Prominent U.S.-based Chinese dissident Wang Bingzhang meets the press at a Taipei hotel in his surprise visit after he was not allowed to enter Hong Kong Saturday (Reuters photo)

The veteran dissident lashed out at the Beijing authorities saying his denial of entry into Hong Kong showed the failure of the "one country, two systems," policy under which the former British territory was to retain considerable autonomy following its return to China last July.

Beijing has made the same policy offer to this nationalist island, which it regards as a breakaway province, but has been flatly turned down.

Mr. Wang vowed to return to the mainland, saying "we definitely has the ability to break the block by the Chinese authorities."

He said the new opposition party had formed clandestine branches in Beijing, Shanghai and 15 other cities on the mainland, adding that it aims to set up a minimum of 50 underground offices in China in a year.

Mr. Wang said he would stay in Taiwan for a couple of days before flying back to the United States.

In late January, Mr. Wang slipped into China via Macau using an alias — he was on a list of activists to be refused entry into China.

His intention was to organise an internal opposition party to the ruling Communists, but after a two-week manhunt he was arrested and deported.

After his failure the set up the party in China, the party opened a New York office.

Mr. Wang has been a staunch critic of China for the past 15 years.

He founded the "China Spring" magazine after defecting to the United States and the Alliance for Democracy, the first organisation of Chinese dissidents abroad.

Forest fires sweep through Indonesia's Kalimantan

JAKARTA (R) — Fresh fires have destroyed thousands of hectares of forest in Kalimantan on the Indonesian side of Borneo Island, with soldiers joining firefighters to battle the flames, Antara news agency reported Sunday.

In Riau province on Sumatra Island, Governor Soeripto appealed for help in saving 200 elephants from the fires, Antara said. It gave no more details.

The agency said a fire in the Sungai Wein forest, near the oil town of Balikpapan in east Kalimantan, had already destroyed 2,000 hectares of the 10,000 hectare forest.

A 14-man fire-fighting squad was having trouble controlling the blaze, the latest of several fires that have broken out in the forest since January, the agency said.

It said officials were also concerned about the town's water supply, which flows through the forest. Balikpapan's several hundred thousand residents are dependent on the water supplies.

North of Balikpapan, a separate fire was burning on a large front along the highway from Balikpapan to the town of Samarinda. The fire had destroyed reforested land and was heading towards natural forest, Antara said without giving details on the size of the blaze.

Security forces, forest workers and firefighters using fire trucks were trying to contain the blaze, the agency said.

Fires have swept through many parts of Indonesia in recent months, creating a pall of smoke that threatens to engulf neighbouring countries.

Widespread fires on Kalimantan and Sumatra last year created a choking haze that blanketed much of South East Asia, raising health fears and costing the region's tourist industry million of dollars.

Experts said at the weekend the region's $26 billion tourist industry could be blighted for years if the smog returned on the same scale this year.

Analysts have also expressed fears over the long-term damage to the environment and potential loss of wildlife. Such as endangered species of orangutans.

Nobel winner Garcia Marquez unveils surprise memoirs

MEXICO CITY (R) — Nobel prize winner Gabriel Garcia Marquez revealed a personal secret Saturday when he unveiled the first chapter of a forthcoming book of memoirs at the Mexico City festival.

The Colombian author of "One Hundred Years of Solitude" surprised a packed house at the 18th-century Colegio Nacional building when he revealed he had been working on his memoirs "Vivir Para Contarlo" (Living to tell the tale) for more than ten years, and plans to publish six volumes.

"The first one is ready. It will be a challenge to see how far I get," the 71-year-old Garcia Marquez said with a smile.

The 1982 Nobel prize winner had star billing in a series of lectures on the "geography of the novel" introduced by veteran Mexican novelist Carlos Fuentes. But the hundreds of people that had queued for hours to catch a rare public glimpse of Garcia Marquez heard an autobiographical talk instead.

"I started (the memoirs) from the day in which I was really born, when I became a writer," Garcia Marquez said, referring to when he dropped out of law school in 1950 and tried to make a living out of journalism while reading Spanish classics.

Then aged 23, Garcia Marquez travelled with his mother to his home town of Aracataca where she tried to persuade him to resume his studies.

Instead of giving in to her pressures, he drew inspiration to write a series and novels based on the small Caribbean town surrounded by swamps and banana plantations, which was so desolate it appeared to have been abandoned by time itself.

Garcia Marquez said one those plantations was called "Macondo", the name he later gave to the town where he set his 1967 novel "One Hundred Years of Solitude."

He denied the reputation he had acquired as a "writer of fables."

"I recall our Caribbean reality with such a selective criterion that it seems incredible," he said.

Kidnappers of two American Mormons demand $300,000 ransom

MOSCOW (AFP) — The kidnappers of two American Mormon missionaries abducted three days ago in the Volga region are demanding a ransom of $300,000, Russian NTV television reported Sunday.

It quoted local governor Dmitry Ayatskov as saying the ransom money had already been raised.

While measures were being taken to protect the 30 or so other missionaries in the region, Mr. Ayatskov said they would be invited to go and do their work elsewhere.

Andre Propst, from Lebanon, Oregon, and Travis Tuttle, from Gilbert Arizona, both aged 20, were snatched Thursday from a Mormon church in the city of Saratov, which is some 700 kilometres from Moscow, in the Samara region.

The U.S. embassy in Moscow Friday described the abductions as "a very grave matter" and asked the Russian authorities to do all they could to secure the release of the pair.

A criminal investigation was opened by the regional branch of the Federal Security Service (FSB — ex-KGB) at Saratov.

The Church of the Latter-Day Saints has six missions in Russia and has made around 5,000 converts since the first branch of the church was officially recognised by the then Soviet authorities in 1990.

Religions and foreign sects have become very popular since the collapse of the former Soviet Union, but the Russian Orthodox Church is determined to hang on to its congregations and managed to persuade the government to pass a law last year which foreign churches, especially the Roman Catholic Church, regard as discriminatory.

The law obliges all religious organisation to register or reregister with the authorities, a complex administrative procedure aimed at halting the expansion of sects and which seriously penalises minority religions.

Russia could go Communist in 2000

MOSCOW (AFP) — Russian First Deputy Prime Minister Anatoly Chubais has predicted a Communist could win presidential elections scheduled for the year 2000, Interfax news agency reported Sunday.

"A victory for the forces of the left is possible in Russia, and I would not rule out this possibility," Mr. Chubais said in an interview with Interfax.

However a return to an old-style Communist regime was ruled out by Mr. Chubais, considered the driving force behind reforms along with fellow First Deputy Prime Minister Boris Nemtsov.

Mr. Chubais said a Communist victory was possible as Russia's business community was unlikely to back one candidate, as they did with current president Boris Yeltsin in his successful 1996 campaign.

Moldovian President Petru Lucinschi leaves a ballot booth at a polling station in the Moldovian capital of Chisinau (Reuters photo)

Moldovans vote in poll; old-style Communists tipped to win

CHISINAU (AFP) — Moldovans began voting Sunday in legislative elections in which old-style Communists are the frontrunners according to the latest opinion polls.

Polling stations opened at 8.00 a.m. (0600 GMT) and are due to close at 8.00 p.m. (1800 GMT). Early indications of the outcome are expected from midnight (2200 GMT).

The poll is being scrutinised by international and local observers.

Fifteen parties and 67 independent candidates are vying for the 101 seats in parliament, although only four have a serious chance of breaking through the four per cent barrier for entrance into the legislative body.

The Moldova Communist Party, which is nostalgic for the old days in this landlocked former Soviet republic, is credited with 21 per cent of voting intentions.

If it comes out on top, the party, which currently has only seven deputies, has pledged an end to liberal reforms, a return to a centralised economy and "the rebirth of a socialist society."

Elections are not being held in breakaway Transdnestr, which voted unilaterally for secession in 1990 and whose 740,000 inhabitants are mostly ethnic Russians and Ukrainians, whereas Moldovans are Romanian-speaking.

But 10 polling stations have been set up along the river Dniestr, which acts as a buffer between the secessionist territory and the rest of Moldova, to allow voters who want to take part to cast their ballots.

Observers from the Organisation of Security and Cooperation in Europe are stationed in the zone to verify that local authorities in Transdnestr do not try to prevent voters from exercising their rights.

Strong earthquake jolts northeastern Afghanistan

KABUL (AFP) — A strong earthquake jolted northeastern Afghanistan overnight but there were no immediate reports of loss of life or property, aid workers in the region said Sunday.

They said tremors of relatively strong intensity were felt around 11:00 p.m. (1830 GMT Saturday) forcing people in Takhar province to rush out of their homes.

Sources in Pakistan said an earthquake measuring 5.9 on Richter scale simultaneously shook Islamabad, Rawalpindi and several northern districts bordering Afghanistan.

The epicentre of the quake was located 250 kilometres north of the Pakistani border city of Peshawar in the Hindukush mountain range, they said.

Northern Afghanistan was hit by a powerful earthquake on Feb. 4 and aid agencies said some 4,500 people were killed. The worst affected was Rustaq town in Takhar province controlled by Afghanistan's anti-Talehan opposition forces where thousands of people were rendered homeless.

"There are no damage or losses in Rustaq," Western aid workers contacted by satellite telephone told reporters.

However they said teams of aid workers had been sent to investigate the situation in the outlying, remote areas in the mountainous region.

Sources here said the earthquake also rocked the Afghan capital but there were no reports of losses.

Former cop alleges massive corruption in New Zealand police

WELLINGTON (AFP) — The New Zealand police force is riddled with corruption and a royal commission is needed to root it out, according to a former detective.

In his book "Coverups and Copouts", to be published Monday, Tom Lewis alleges he witnessed a series of scandals during more than 20 years with the police, NZPA reported Sunday. His allegations include what he describes as the "spectacular" cover-up in 1981 of an assassination attempt on Queen Elizabeth II by Christopher John Lewis, a psychopath found dead in his prison cell last September two weeks before he was due to go on trial for the murder of an Auckland mother.

"I have a grave suspicion ... that the people of New Zealand would get a big shock" if there was a commission of inquiry, Mr. Lewis was quoted as saying in his book.

Mr. Lewis quit the police force in 1986 after alleging there had been a high-level cover-up over a sex ring in the South Island city of Dunedin, where he was based, involving under-age girls.

Mr. Lewis, who now lives in Queensland, Australia, claimed coverups were still happening "on a massive scale."

In one case a senior officer was allowed to resign on medical grounds rather than face charges for indecently assaulting a number of women, he alleged.

National police Assistant Commissioner Ian Holyoake said Sunday he had yet to see a copy of Mr. Lewis's book. "However, some of the claims he has made have already been fully investigated," Mr. Holyoake said.

Two dead in Shining Path, Peruvian army shootout

LIMA (AFP) — A soldier and a Shining Path guerrilla were killed in a 45-minute gun battle between an army patrol and a group of the Maoist rebels, police reported.

The patrol and the guerrillas clashed around 10 a.m. (1500 GMT) Saturday on a jungle highway near the town of Aucayacu, some 500 kilometres northeast of Lima.

The guerrillas ambushed the patrol of 25 soldiers that had been searching for a site to set up a counter-insurgency base. One soldier was injured in the shoot-out, police sources told AFP.

The army has yet to issue a report on the battle and has refused to comment on the incident despite repeated media queries.

The injured soldier was rushed to a hospital in the city of Tingo Maria, police said.

In a separate incident, four Shining Path supporters killed an 82-year-old man by blowing him up with a stick of dynamite in a shanty town just east of Lima.

The killers put a sign over the dead man's neck that said in red ink: "This is how the exploiters die."

The man's 32-year-old daughter, who was injured in the attack, told reporters that her father owned a brick oven and a few plots of land in the shanty town of Nieveria.

Police consider Nieveria a "red zone" where Shining Path supporters are actively trying to recruit residents.

Indonesian minister forbids student hunger strikes

JAKARTA (AFP) — Indonesia's Education Minister Wiranto Arismunandar has forbidden students from going on hunger strike to protest against the current crisis, as foreign leaders warn of deepening turmoil.

Dozens of students are currently on hunger strike at several universities on Java and Sumatra to push for comprehensive reforms in the economy, political and legal system to overcome the country's economic crisis. Some have also called for curbs on rising prices of essential goods, which have already sparked mass rioting in several Indonesian towns earlier this year.

Mr. Arismunandar was quoted by the Kompas daily as saying going on hunger strike was unacceptable because it harmed health.

"Let Gandhi go on hunger strikes, you are not Gandhi," he said, referring to the late Indian nationalist leader Mahatma Gandhi who advocated peaceful means to fight colonial oppression.

Mr. Arismunandar's comments followed a meeting with leaders and members of the Indonesian private universities' consultative body. The hunger strikes are part of a series of almost daily demonstrations in universities to demand reforms as Indonesia's economic crisis worsens.

In Sydney, reports quoted Australian Foreign Minister Alexandre Downer as having said food prices in Indonesia could jump by another 200 per cent this year and trigger renewed unrest.

"The fact is we have seen food prices in Indonesia increase in recent times by around 50 per cent or so and there is a real prospect we could see food prices increase by anything up to 200 per cent during the course of this year," Mr. Downer said.

A regional think-tank has also warned that failure to address Indonesia's problems could halt progress made by other regional governments in tackling the economic crisis.

The Hong Kong-based Political and Economic Risk Consultancy called Indonesia a wildcard. "The policy mix of its government since last November has been so poor that is difficult to see how the situation can be turned around short of a change in government."

"That is unlikely to happen without a further deterioration in both economic and social conditions. Such a deterioration could be corrosive on the rest of the region as well," PERC said.

Singaporean Prime Minister Goh Chok Tong, speaking at the opening of a community centre late Saturday in the island republic, also stressed that although regional economies had begun to recover from the crisis, a full turnaround depended on stability in Indonesia.

Thousands of students have rallied peacefully in campuses across the country since Feb. 25, but this week scores of students have been injured as security forces prevented the protesters from leaving campuses.

Indonesian security forces have so far respected the campus boundaries and its leaders have said that peaceful student rallies would be allowed as long as they stayed within the confines of the university grounds. Indonesian officials were then in talks with the IMF to review reforms commitments made by Jakarta in return for a some $40 billion rescue package from the multilateral organisation.

The IMF has delayed the second disbursement of its bailout package saying that Jakarta was dragging its feet in implementing the agreed reforms.

In the latest campus incident, at the state Lampung university in Bandar Lampung, the capital of the Lampung province, thousands of students clashed with some 500 security forces Thursday, leaving around 27 students and at least three policemen injured, resident sources said.

The head of the police command in Lampung, Lieutenant General Suadi Atma was quoted by the Antara news agency as saying, all students that had been detained after the clash were released later on the same day. Peaceful student demonstrations Saturday were reported in Yogyakarta, Central Java, with hundreds of students from at least eight universities rallying at the state Gajah Mada university.

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Respect the judiciary

THERE SEEMS to be a tendency on the part of the Parliament to debate the temporary press and publications law despite the fact that the High Court of Justice's ruling that the legislation was unconstitutional. The reason that is being cited is that only Parliament has legislative powers and being a branch of government separate from the judiciary it can look into laws that are even rejected by the courts.

This point of view is arguable at best. For although the Constitution does not provide for a constitutional court nor does it say that the judiciary is higher in rank to both the executive and the legislative powers, it is customary in all constitutional systems to regard the judiciary as the ultimate arbiter on all cases of contention involving the state, its branches of government and its citizens.

The temporary press law, which in May last year was urgently passed by the government while Parliament was in recess but still sitting, was declared unconstitutional by the High Court because it lacked the justification provided for in the Constitution, i.e. that it necessitated urgent action that could not be deferred until a new Parliament was elected and convened in the fall.

The temporary law was sent to Parliament to consider not as a draft law as is customary but as a provisional law. When the court passed its ruling the law ceased to exist as a legal document. The provisional law that is now in the hands of a Lower House committee is therefore a non-document. It is null and void. And the best thing to do with it is to throw it in the dustbin.

Unfortunately, a way has been devised whereby the House committee would debate the legislation and refer it to the full House for passage or rejection. The government would then be happy to see its law being acted on one way or the other.

This of course is not the best solution for the press, which would have to endure once more the pressures of the past several months. Such course of action could also undermine the authority of the judiciary and create a constitutional conflict that will haunt us for a long time to come.

ARABIC PRESS COMMENTARIES

Al Arab Al Yawm's Taher Adwan analysed Israel's decision to withdraw its forces from southern Lebanon saying that the move has its negative and positive consequences. Withdrawal from southern Lebanon, a territory occupied by Israeli troops for more than two decades, is bound to project Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu as a man of peace, said the writer. Indeed, Netanyahu will hit two birds with one stone: He will pull back Israel's forces saving them further losses and so win popular support in the next parliamentary elections, and on the other hand the move will help him withstand any possible pressure on Israel to evacuate Palestinian or Syrian lands at least for the present, according to the writer. He said for Lebanon the move is very positive because the Israeli pull-out will project Hizbollah as a hero, winning this resistance force further credibility in the eyes of the Lebanese and the Arab people at large. But unfortunately, the pull-out will remove immediate pressure on Israel to withdraw from Syria and Palestine.

Al Dustour's Mohammad Daoud said the Central Bank which had announced plans to take control of the savings funds of the various private institutions has now displayed flexibility and is now meeting with representatives of these funds to reach a compromise. There is no need for those in control of the funds to dissolve them as long as the door for negotiations is open for middle ground solutions, said the writer. He said it is better for the beneficiaries not to receive their savings now and wait for the end of service when they would be in dire need of them. Should the negotiations with the Central Bank fail then these various institutions would be justified to dissolve the funds, said the writer. But he also noted that the plan is a draft law which could be frozen by the government or voted against by Parliament.

Economic Review

Dr. Yusuf Mansur

Going full circle on the way to an Arab Common Market

THE SUBJECT of creating an Arab Common Market (ACM) — an on again, off again, hotly debated topic — was the theme of a conference held in Cairo last week under the auspices of the Arab League in cooperation with the Freidrich Naumann Foundation. Many of the insights of the distinguished speakers at the conference drew from past and/or actual experiences and from other free trade arrangements such as the Southern Cone Common Market (MERCOSUR) in South America, the European Union (EU), the Association of South East Asian Nations (ASEAN) and the South Asian Association of Regional Cooperation (SAARC). The proceedings underpinned several of the major issues that the creation of an ACM would involve and although the recommendations did not deviate from the normal call for movement toward this noble goal, one became toward the end of the conference, at worst, an enlightened cynic.

First, it is important to point out that the subject of creating an ACM has to be preceded with an Arab Free Trade Area (AFTA) the creation of which has already proven to be a very difficult process. In fact, we, in the Arab World, have been talking about a common market/free trade area since 1953 when a trade facilitation agreement was created with the aim of easing the movement of goods among the participating Arab countries. The AFTA removed tariffs on agricultural products, livestock and raw materials and gave preferential treatment to industrial goods that originated in one of the contracting countries by reducing tariffs by 25 per cent of the rates applied to industrial goods imported from other countries.

Unfortunately, the diverse nature of the developmental needs and the huge national balance-of-payment deficits of some countries made the agreement impractical for many of the signatories. Not realising that studies must be conducted to evaluate the impact and ensuing success/failure of such an agreement, the Arab League decided in 1957 to establish an Arab Common Market. Only four countries joined this market: Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Egypt, (Libya joined in 1975). The four member countries voted to free trade completely by January 1, 1971. After several investigations however, it was determined that the decision to establish an ACM was premature and that further studies and multilateral arrangements were needed.

Undaunted by past trials, the Arab League met in 1980 for the sole purpose of resolving the economic problems of member states. Based on its findings, the league presented an agreement for facilitating and promoting inter-Arab trade in 1981. It seems that in 1998, three and a half decades after 1953, we have come full circle to speak again about the Arab Common Market.

However, as I mentioned earlier, one remains at best a cynic. Facts on the ground present us with many inconsistencies that limit the feasibility of such a market. Inter Arab trade accounts for less than 10 per cent (6.5 per cent according to some accounts) of the volume of their total trade with the world. The total population of the Arab countries is estimated at 260 million (Egypt alone represents one-fourth of the total Arab population) and is expected to rise to 290 million by the year 2000. The present population growth rate in the Arab world of 4.2% is among the highest in the world (0.6 per cent in industrial countries and 1.7 per cent for the whole world), which means that unless there are highly efficient product and labour markets unemployment will be on the rise for many years to come. The income of the individual in the Arab World ranges from a per capita income of $260 in Somalia to a per capita income of $18,000 in Kuwait. The disparity in incomes make a common market where labour and capital can roam freely a present impossibility.

However, all is not lost. We can learn from the experiences of the EU, MERCOSUR, ASEAN, and SAARC. Those countries that have signalled their readiness to join an AFTA should go ahead and do it. Others can join as observers or temporary members for the present. In other words, progress can be made gradually without the lofty schemes of brotherly love, etc. where all or nothing must be the outcome. After all, we should never lose sight of what is required for now, which is simply a free trade agreement and not a political union. The main concern is with the movement of goods — never mind services which could be more difficult to enter into the agreement (although they are much more important in terms of size and developmental effects on the Arab economies).

So, our motto should be to "keep it simple, start with what there is and accept what is not." The experiences of others tell us that this is the correct approach. The whole world is moving toward trade blocks, unless we do join or form an Arab trade block we will not be able to influence trade negotiations with the existing major trade groupings. Let us not wait too long.

Beirut diary — A giant of the war falls before the wrath of God

By Robert Fisk

FIRST, THEY ripped down the bombed-out American embassy. Then last year, the wreckage of the U.S. Marine base — 241 U.S. servicemen died in the 1983 suicide bombing — was bulldozed away.

But on Monday God took a hand and tore down one of the Lebanese civil war's most enduring monuments: the great yellow, red and green ferris wheel that had turned merrily for the past 20 years.

Bombs had exploded 20 yards away. Shells had crashed into the funfair behind. But it was a tempest of even more explosive proportions that brought the whole thing twisting and buckling to the ground this week.

I'd been on the big wheel myself with a score of Lebanese families. I'd even helped make a Channel 4 television series in which our cameraman, Steve Foster, filmed Beirut from one of the bucket chairs that now lies crumpled at the bottom of my street. But I wasn't surprised at its fate.

Not in living memory had a typhoon of this proportion struck the city, a monstrous wind quite unlike the khamsin storm that normally dumps Egypt's grey sand over Lebanon at the start of spring. I flew back to Beirut on an Air France Airbus as the first tempest subsided, a great camel ride of a flight that landed in Beirut with a coating of yellow sand on the plane's wings.

For the sand falling across Beirut is from a sahra wind, from Libya, along with so much rain that our sunsets have come dark red through the cyclone. At my home on the Corniche, the deluge has been flying horizontally off the sea, smashing into my apartment block to be blasted upwards by the wind.

I found our family cat Walter — named after the news editor of the International Herald Tribune — sitting in astonishment on the balcony as rain streamed from the ground towards the top of the house. Maybe this was what it felt like to go down on the Titanic (of which more later).

On Tuesday, I drove down the rain-lashed coast to the south Lebanese town of Tibnin where the Irish battalion of the United Nations peace force was celebrating Saint Patrick's Day. Colonel Colm Doyle — Lord Carrington's ADC in Yugoslavia — inspected his men alongside the U.N.'s new Fijian force commander, a massive figure — and a massive improvement on his Polish predecessor who filled almost every page of the U.N.'s magazine, Politburo-style, with pictures of himself.

The soldiers wore sprigs of shamrock, forced to receive their latest U.N. medals under a tent whose roof vibrated with the downpour. The U.N.'s equally massive Turkish spokesman, Timur Goksel, had to shout to make himself heard, difficult since the confident, loquacious — and brilliant — Goksel speaks English so well but at such speed that he sometimes verges on the incomprehensible.

But what sounded over Tibnin on Tuesday were the claps of thunder that detonated down the airwaves to Ireland as RTE, the Irish state broadcasting service, interviewed its U.N. soldiers live down the line to Dublin. Presenters shouted through the storm as great blue and grey clouds trembling with lightning drifted down the wadis around Tibnin.

And there at one point was Fisk, waffling on to Irish listeners about the inconsistencies of Lebanon's constitution — in Mayo, no doubt, they speak of little else — while being drowned out by God's anger overhead.

For a people inured to tragedy, you might wonder why the Lebanese have been turning out in legions to see Titanic. But they have, packing six cinemas (a Beirut record) at 55,000 spectators a week (another record). Does the liner's fate appeal to them as the elements close in on Beirut? Are they attracted by the name of the ship, which in Arabic means "Let's have sex"?

Or could it be that we Westerners simply do not know what the Beirutis know: that 123 Lebanese, praying vainly for God's mercy in steerage, went down with the Titanic, their names unrecorded because they boarded as wait-listed passengers at Cherbourg.

For the most part, they were poor Christians from the Bekaa valley and — because their names went unlisted and, no doubt, because they were of "Middle East appearance" — no one in the great world cared about their fate except the families left behind in Lebanon.

It was the same case with the five Sidon fishermen who vanished into the storm on Monday. Their names were buried in the weather reports in the papers, consigned to the waves which crashed over the coast road and sprayed across the wreckage of the Beirut ferris wheel. But on Tuesday, their two little boats appeared at the entrance to Sidon port.

They had lost sight of shore, roped themselves together in the typhoon and fought off the sea for 12 hours while praying — Titanic-style — for God's mercy. Astonished police and harbour workers watched the two battered hulks creep into calm waters. And so it was that Bassam Habli, Hassan Chaabane, Rifaat al-Aadil, Farj Halime and Khaled Awja came home.

— *The Independent*

Human Rights File

Right of asylum under review

By Walid M. Sadi

THE RECENT wave of refugees entering Italy's territorial waters seeking refuge gave rise to a fresh reappraisal of the grounds for seeking refugee status by people driven not only by political and human rights factors but also by economic considerations. Whereas the overwhelming majority of refugee status seekers flee their homeland because of persecution and being denied basic human rights, there is now, however, a new breed of refugee seekers who are driven by solely economic reasons and want only an opportunity to better their lives and the lives of their loved ones. Under current international norms, especially under the 1951 International Convention on the Status of Refugees, no person or a group of persons who leaves their country for strictly economic reasons can qualify as a refugee and be accorded refugee status by any given receiving country. This "discrimination" against people who seek economic opportunities elsewhere in the world is often justified on the premise that the doors of the developed countries would be uncontrollably flooded with economically driven emigrants from poor countries should the basis of refugee status be expanded to cover economic deprivation or persecution.

Yet, notwithstanding the practical constraints on expanding the rationale for according refugee status, it is high time the economic dimension and related issues be given at least some consideration. As long as we treat economic, cultural and social rights on par with political and civil rights, as so many countries now demand, there will come a time when we need to provide people seeking the fulfillment of their economic, religious, and cultural rights a treatment proportionate to that which is accorded to people seeking political freedom and civil and political human rights.

During the 1993 Vienna Summit on human rights, the majority of the participating countries voiced their concern about the downgrading of economic, social and cultural rights and called for the rapid upgrading of these goals as more urgent and pressing than their political and civil counterpart rights. If a man can run away from his country because she or he fears genuine persecution and grave abuse of her or his civil and political rights and seeks a refugee status in any industrial or developed nation, why then cannot a person leaving his country because he wants to feed himself and the members of his family and provide them with proper housing, education, social justice do the same and be given refugee status as well. If the international community continues to treat non-political and civil rights as inferior to the complementary political and civil rights, then they are in effect cruising against the current put into motion by the Vienna Summit and the various international human rights fora that go beyond the political dimensions of human rights.

After the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was adopted in 1948, the comity of nations proceeded to codify the declaration into two principal conventions that are legally binding for the countries which ratify or accede to them. These two basic human rights instruments are the International Convention on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) and the International Convention on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (ICESC). There was never the intention behind this dual and complementary codification of the declaration's articles to promote one set of rights at the expense of another. These two pillars of human rights standards were further elaborated by a string of other thematic treaties that drew their essence and norms from the ICCPR and ICESC.

True it was thought at the outset that whereas ICCPR must be given immediate effect, ICESC rights could only be given progressive application since they would require a certain minimum economic base that few developing countries can expect to enjoy except gradually. But this proposition does and should not give rise to the argument that ESC rights are second class human rights. If people can enjoy the right of asylum for civil and political rights, why not extend this right to economic, social and cultural rights. Given the scope of these rights which could encompass the most basic religious and cultural rights, why not permit people to seek refuge when these rights are denied. Besides, the enjoyment of civil and political rights is dependent not only on political will but also socio-economic conditions. Fair trial offers a classic example where one set of human rights is organically linked to the other. Poor countries can never accord their peoples the "luxury" of fair trial if the state of their economy precludes the mobilisation of fair minded judges. The same could also apply to torture and persecution when police remain ignorant of sophisticated and just methods of investigation and detention.

As we are talking about the right of temporary asylum *and not a permanent asylum that may bestow on the asylum* seeker the right to permanent residence, there is room for expanding our horizon when it comes to refugee status. It is one thing to accord people temporary relief pending the changing of circumstances in their homeland and quite another thing to turn this asylum status into a permanent stay in a foreign land in violation of its immigration policy and its capacity to host refugee seekers. As long as this caveat is kept in mind, temporary refugee status can be given to a wider scope of human rights abuses including economic, social and cultural rights.

LETTERS

Predictable vetoes

To the editor:

WE HAVE lost count of how many times the U.N. vote has been "the family of nations — yes," America and Israel — no." Micronesia hardly counts, as this vote is no doubt the result of great political and economic pressure. These predictable vetoes are particularly stressful and painful for many of us Americans who live and work here. It would be much easier if America simply came out with a statement like: "We are for Israel regardless of what justice and fairness and international law would dictate — period."

That would be easier to accept than all this cant and hypocrisy about being the champion of "human rights" and "justice" around the world.

America has, by her persistent veto against the family of nations, undermined, not only international law, but the very values she has so self-righteously championed around the world. What are we to make of a government which "disapproves" of settlement policy, and then continually supports a hard-line Israeli administration which trumpets defiantly that it will "continue to build" with little or no regard for U.N. resolutions.

British Foreign Secretary Robin Cook was a breath of fresh air blowing through the region. I admire his courage and willingness to let the chips fall where they may in the interest of stating the truth.

Israeli Prime Minister Benyamin Netanyahu's reaction only demonstrated how spoiled Israel has become by American waffling and shuffling over issues that should have been driven home in no uncertain terms decades ago. Of course, the European Union is now accused by Israel as being unqualified as a fair mediator. "Fairness" in this case means letting Israel get away with almost total disregard for international law.

The ball is back in President Bill Clinton's court, and he would do well to pay attention to what His Majesty King Hussein is telling him during his current visit to Washington.

Bob Robertson
Amman

'Ill-judged delivery'

To the editor:

REGARDING THE British foreign minister's visit to this region, Robin Cook's wise counsel is noteworthy only for its ill-judged delivery.

I am sure Cook felt it was his duty — considering that Britain now holds the EU's rotating presidency — to hold forth with his views on the ongoing and complicated peace negotiations. However, what he expected to achieve by antagonising Israel is a genuine mystery. Israel's diplomatic snub of Cook was quite correct.

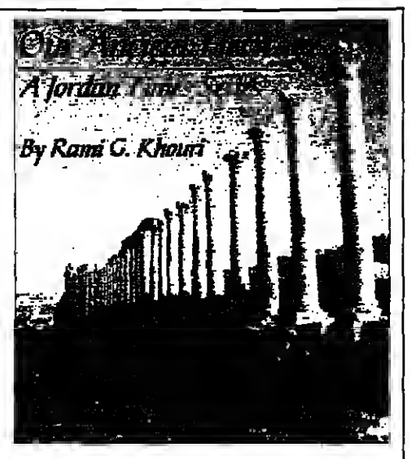
The framework for negotiations consists of the United States acting as the mediator between Israel and the Palestinian National Authority. This is a framework accepted by both parties and is the only realistic approach towards achieving an outcome acceptable to both Israel and the PNA.

Cook amply demonstrates that there is no shortage of advice as to how a lasting peace can be achieved. He also demonstrates what happens when there are too many little "cooks" in the kitchen.

Rex Preston Stoner
Amman

Hesban- Part I:

Three decades on, Tell Hesban again pioneers archaeological research in Jordan



By Rami G. Khouri
Special to the Jordan Times

This is the first of two articles on the archaeological and environmental investigation of Tell Hesban, one of Jordan's most important antiquities sites. This week's article examines what has been learned about the history of this site since the biblical period. Next week's article discusses the environmental, cultural and other dimensions of the research at Tell Hesban and environs.

THE LARGE archaeological site of Tell Hesban south of Amman has always been something of an enigma in the annals of Jordanian archaeology — one of the richest and most important antiquities sites in Jordan, it is also one of the least visited by Jordanians or tourists from abroad.

All this may soon change, however, as members of the Hesban team return to the site once again — three decades after it was first excavated in 1968 — to conduct further research and expand their analyses into new fields. The initial Tell Hesban expedition set national and regional standards of archaeological excavation in such areas as pottery chronologies and multi-disciplinary approaches to the study of the past. Today it promises to do so again, in at least two ways: the development of facilities (in close cooperation with local residents) to help visitors walk through the tell and appreciate the antiquities visible above the ground; and the multi-sectoral studies of environments and lifestyles from antiquity until today.

The initial three seasons of archaeological excavations at Tell Hesban in 1968-1973 were headed by the late Dr. Siegfried Horn of Andrews University. After Dr. Horn retired several more seasons of fieldwork were directed by Dr. Lawrence Geraty, now president of La Sierra University (California, USA). That initial work at Hesban quickly spawned new archaeological investigations throughout the wider Madaba Plains region, such as at Sahab, Tell Umeiri, Tell Jalul, Tell Jawa, and others. Roger Boraas, professor emeritus at Upsala College (New Jersey, USA) was chief archaeologist for the work at Hesban.

The two most recent seasons of research, surveying, and site services development at Hesban in 1996 and 1997 have been under the auspices of the Madaba Plains Project and have been directed by Dr. Oystein LaBianca, professor of anthropology at Andrews University and a member of the original Hesban team.

The dig's initial focus sought to determine whether Tell Hesban was the site of the biblical town of Heshbon — home of King Sihon of the Amorites (Numbers 21:21-31) and one of the kings defeated by Moses during the Israelite "conquest." That question remains unanswered, and the project work has since expanded into a long-term study of changes in the cultural patterns, environmental conditions, and food systems of the people who lived at the site throughout history.

The site is very easy to visit, located as it is alongside the Na'ur-Madaba road about halfway between the two towns. A total of 19 different historical periods — or archaeological strata — have been documented at Tell Hesban to date. The remains within the tell span some 3000 years of history, from the beginning of the Iron Age (around 1200 B.C.) until today.

An Ammonite statue of Yeru 'Azar from the late 8th Century B.C., excavated on the Citadel in Amman, is typical of the Ammonite culture that dominated the community at Hesban in that period (after Zayadine, courtesy of Andrews University, Heshbon Expedition)

Several reasons explain the site's long human exploitation: its strategic location at the intersection of main ancient roads running north-south on the Jordanian plateau and east-west to the Jordan Valley and the Jerusalem area; its commanding hilltop view over the Madaba Plains area; and the plentiful supply of water, good farmland, pasturage, and forested hills within a few kilometres. Hesban in the Iron Age was also located at the frontier of constantly feuding political entities, including Ammon, Moab, Israel and Judah.

Iron Age origins

The earliest documented human settlement at Hesban was a possibly fortified village at the beginning of the Early Iron Age, around 1250-1200 B.C. Hesban project ceramist Dr. James Sauer says that "it is not possible to know if the Iron IA/B remains at Hesban represent ancient Amorites/Canaanites, Israelites, Ammonites, Moabites, or others, since they all seem to attest similar material culture."

Visitors today can now see parts of that first biblical era village's four-metre-deep defensive moat along the south side of the site, though the houses and defensive wall of that village were very poorly preserved. The eastern end of the moat was identified last year.

The small initial settlement at Hesban expanded throughout the Early Iron Age (ca. 1250 - 900 B.C.), and in the 10th or 9th Century B.C. the villagers built a large water reservoir to meet the needs of the expanding town. Measuring 17.5 metres square and seven metres deep, the reservoir could hold 2.2 million cubic litres — but how water reached it, given its location on the upper portion of the hill, remains something of a mystery. Part of the reservoir's plastered eastern wall is still visible today.

The reservoir seems to have gone out of use soon after its initial construction. For the next two centuries the site appears to have been largely abandoned, perhaps used as a seasonal campsite, Dr. LaBianca told the Jordan Times in a recent interview at Hesban.

The settlement came back to life in the 7th and 6th Centuries B.C., when this region alternately fell within the ever changing boundaries of the Ammonite and Moabite Kingdoms (perhaps these were often more like tribal confederations than formal kingdoms, the scholars working at the site suggest). The large reservoir was put back into use, the central residential area of the hilltop settlement was built up, and a defensive wall was built along the western slope of the tell. Cultural remains such as pottery and inscriptions excavated from this Late Iron period suggest that the settlement "was probably controlled by the Ammonites, and may have served as a way station or supply depot along the King's Highway," Dr. LaBianca said.

Some scholars argue that Hesban was controlled by Moabites at times (as is mentioned in Jeremiah 48 in the Bible), and there is also evidence (mostly names) of Egyptian, Babylonian and West Semitic influences, probably reflecting extensive regional trading contacts.

Ammonite ostraca (pottery sherds with writing on them) show that the Ammonite inhabitants of the site were literate, shared a common linguistic tradition with Canaanites and Israelites to the west, wrote in a derivative of the Aramaic script, and shared artistic and iconographic traditions with peoples on both sides of the Jordan River, according to Lawrence Geraty and Hesban expedition epigrapher Professor Frank Cross, Jr. of Harvard University.

The Late Iron Age/Persian town suffered a swift and violent end in the 5th Century B.C. and seems to have been abandoned again. For some three centuries during the Late Persian and Early Hellenistic periods, Hesban may have been used primarily by seasonal campers or nomads. When the town was rebuilt in the 2nd Century B.C., workers scraped and shoved large quantities of ash and debris from the abandoned Late Iron Age town into the reservoir, with no significant evidence of cultural remains between the 5th and 2nd Centuries B.C.

The hilltop site's strategic value was next recognised and exploited in the Late Hellenistic era, when a military fort was built on the summit in the 2nd Century B.C.; at the same time, the many caves in the surrounding hills were extensively re-used and built up. The Hellenistic era fort, with its four corner towers and a massive, nearly two-metre-thick wall that connected them, was probably built around 200 B.C., and may have been controlled by the Hasmonaeans later in the Hellenistic era. The military role of the structure is confirmed by the large percentage of military artefacts excavated there, such as armour scales, slingstones, maceheads and arrowheads; no other period in the site's history shows the same high percentage of military artefacts. This Hellenistic era fort dominates the summit of the site today, and provides the focal point for visitors. The work in 1997 cleared a corner tower and the fort's southern entrance.

Roman Esbus

The settlement at Hesban was known as Eshus in the Roman period. It found itself strategically located at the intersection of the Via Nova Trajana (Trajan's New Road) and the long established road from Heshan to Livias and Jericho in the south Jordan Valley. Excavations of the Roman period town revealed that the fort's western perimeter wall was strengthened by the addition of a sloping stone structure. An inn with an enclosed courtyard surrounded by rooms was built south of the fort later in the Roman period.

The Hesban team also uncovered the remains of what is thought to have been a small temple on the summit of the site. The portico walls of the temple were cleaned last year, and future plans are to reconstruct part of the temple entrance. Coins from the Roman era show a temple at Hesban, perhaps the same structure being documented in the excavations.

As was the case in many other parts of Jordan, the settlement at Hesban reached its largest size and population in the Byzantine period, when people lived all over the hill and throughout the lands of the modern village. The population increase required more water storage facilities, so two large reservoirs were constructed in the Byzantine period — in the wadis west and east of the main settlement — and water was collected from the wadis via a complex of diversion dams and terraces. The slopes between the hill and the adjacent wadis were terraced, and probably planted with grapes, olive and other fruit trees.

Two Byzantine churches have been excavated to date — one on the acropolis and the other to the north — and others may still be under the ground. Bishops from Hesban/Esbus participated in ecumenical councils as early as the 4th Century AD (i.e., the Council of Nicaea in AD 325). The flourishing churches of the early 4th Century must have been rooted in a pre-Constantine Christianity during the late Roman period, the scholars working at Hesban say. More knowledge of this very early Christian movement could emerge from Hesban, and would be a major new contribution to the study of early Christianity.

The Byzantine period town continued to be inhabited well into the Umayyad period, Dr. LaBianca said, but soon after it seems to have reverted yet again, and for several centuries, to "a state of sleepy inactivity or at best low-intensity activity by semi-sedentary tribesmen."

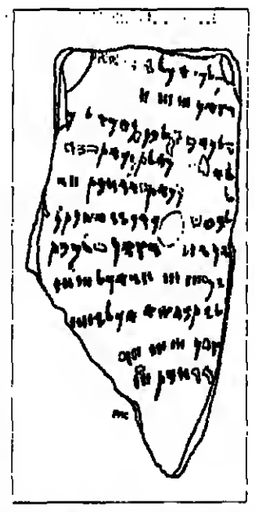
The transition from Byzantine to Persian and then to Islamic rule was apparently relatively peaceful. Perhaps the local people found Persian and then Islamic rule to be "a preferred option" to what had pertained before, in the words of Professor John Lawlor, who directed the excavation of the North Church at Hesban. He has written that "the archaeological evidence clearly indicates that the Arab conquest was not carried out on the basis of a policy of wholesale destruction, nor is there evidence that Christian churches were a particular object of Muslim attack. That some churches were completed and dedicated during the days of the Muslim conquest and others were renovated much later suggests that religious tolerance was generally a part of the Arab policy toward the conquered territories."

Ayyubid revival

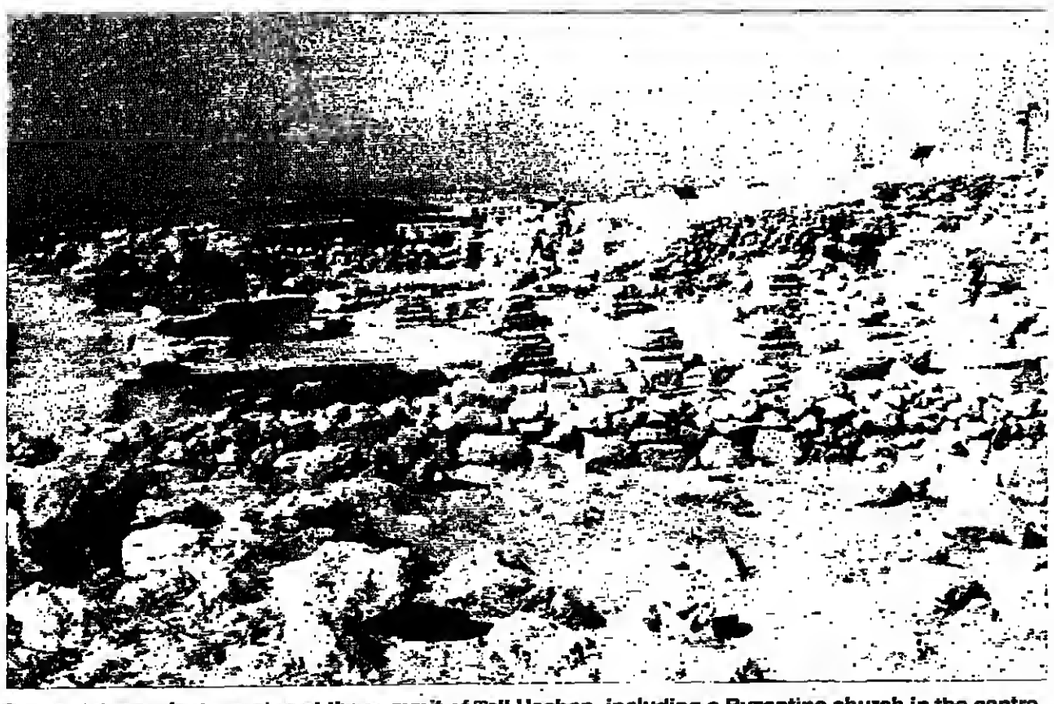
The Ayyubid period marks the revival of the site. Hesban fully exploited its strategic location once again in the succeeding Mamluke period, when a caravansary was built within the Roman-Byzantine remains on the summit. The Mamluke era installation had barrel-vaulted rooms and a bath complex complete with hot and cold water — reflecting Hesban's status during the Mamluke era as the capital of the Belqa region of central Transjordan. The Mamluke bath was restored last summer.

There were at least 300 villages in the district of Hesban in the early Mamluke era, when the town was fortified and prospered due to several reasons: its vibrant agriculture-based economy, its location on the Damascus-to-Cairo postal route, and its status as a seasonal pilgrims' stop, according to Calvin College history professor and Hesban team member Dr. Bert de Vries.

The town's and the region's fortunes declined after the 13th Century AD, due to events such as Tamerlane's attack of Syria in AD 1400/01, the plague that struck the region in the 15th Century, and the advent of Ottoman rule. It was resettled again in the late 19th/early 20th Century and has maintained its status as a large village ever since.



This short text in the Ammonite language was found at Hesban inscribed on a broken piece of pottery, dating from around 600 B.C. It seems to be a royal steward's list of foodstuffs, beef and mutton, grain and wine, money and spices for the household of the king and others (Courtesy of F.M. Cross, Jr.)



Some of the ancient remains at the summit of Tell Hesban, including a Byzantine church in the centre. Some of the newly erected explanation signs are visible in the upper-right corner of photo

Catholic-Jewish talks in shadow of Holocaust

VATICAN CITY (R) — Jewish leaders from around the world on Monday begin four days of meetings with Vatican officials that will be overshadowed by the Holy See's controversial document on the Holocaust.

The talks were arranged well before the document, "we remember, a reflection on the Shoah," was issued last Monday but it is now expected to be a major topic of discussion.

The Jewish leaders will hold talks with the Vatican's commission for religious relations with Jews, which wrote the Holocaust document.

One of the main themes on the agenda is: "Education — what and how do we and ought we teach about each other."

The meetings, which end on Thursday with an audience with Pope John Paul, have become more topical following the Pope's strong defence of his wartime predecessor Pius XII against accusations that he did not do enough to stop the Holocaust.

"He was a great Pope," John Paul said of Pius XII when asked by reporters aboard the plane taking him to Nigeria on Saturday about the reaction to the Vatican's landmark document.

Jews reacted coolly to the long-awaited document and many were particularly irritated by its defence of Pius, whom it effectively absolved of long-standing accusations that he facilitated the Holocaust by remaining silent.

The Vatican's position is that Pius, who reigned from 1939 to 1958, did not speak out more forcefully for fear of worsening the fate of Catholics, as well as Jews, in Germany and Nazi-occupied countries.

Jewish leaders reacted negatively to the Pope's defence of Pius as a "great Pope."

"I don't know how the Pope comes up with something like that. I really don't know," Ignatz Bubis, chairman of central council of Jews in Germany, said on Sunday.

"The report was not satisfactory. It is said that under Pius XII the Catholic church saved hundreds of thousands of lives. Well, those people aren't here. It was several hundred whose lives were saved," Mr. Bubis told Reuters in Frankfurt.

French Jewish leaders also were not pleased.

"Pope John Paul II promised to shed light on the church's responsibility concerning the Shoah," said Henri Hajdenberg, head of the Crif, umbrella group of French Jewish organisations.

"We understand that John Paul II cannot denounce the positions taken by Pope Pius XII, one of his predecessors, but more than 50 years after the Shoah, the time of the heirs has come. It is regrettable to see John Paul II defending Pius XII unconditionally," Mr. Hajdenberg told Reuters in Paris.

"Even if there is no question that Pius XII personally saved thousands of Jews, it is undeniable that he could have saved hundreds of thousands of others if he had revealed the existence and condemned the mass killings of Jews in the east and the extermination camps, which he knew about from 1942," he said.

Some said the Vatican wants end the debate on Pius.

"Apparently the decision has been made to defend the Pontificate of Pius without further debate," a Jewish leader who will attend the talks told Reuters, asking to remain anonymous.

The Vatican's document on the Holocaust apologised for individual Catholics who failed to help Jews. Jewish leaders criticised what they said was the Catholic Church's failure to address its preaching of anti-Jewish contempt for centuries.

They said this made the ground fertile for the worst manifestation of anti-Semitism in the Holocaust.

The Pope told reporters aboard his plane that "a sufficient response has already been given" to the accusations.

The pontiff told reporters to read the writings of Father Pierre Blet, a Jesuit who is the Roman Catholic Church's leading historian of the World War II era.

Father Blet is the last surviving member of a team of church historians allowed to look into the Vatican's World War II archives to rebut the accusations against Pius. They produced an 11-volume study from 1965 to 1981.

Father Blet repeated the defence last week in the influential Jesuit journal Civilta Cattolica.

"The apparent silence hid a secret action carried out [by Pius] through Nunciatures [Vatican embassies] and Episcopates to avoid, or at least to limit, the deportations, the violence, the persecutions," Father Blet wrote.

"Public declarations [by Pius] would not have done anything. They only would have aggravated the fate of the victims and multiplied their numbers," he wrote.

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Arab Gulf states approve gas distribution network

ABU DHABI (AFP) — Arab Gulf states have agreed on a project to set up a joint gas distribution network to tap the immense gas resources of some members and meet growing domestic consumption, an official said Sunday.

The six Gulf Cooperation Council (GCC) countries, which sit atop 45 per cent of the world's oil, are expected to sign an agreement late this year to launch the project, estimated to cost around $1.5 billion.

"The GCC secretary general has sent a letter in this regard to the oil ministers in member states and all of them responded positively," said Hassan Teem, an adviser at the Gulf Organisation for Industrial Consulting (GOIC).

"The ministers are scheduled to meet in Riyadh in October, before the Abu Dhabi GCC summit, to sign a letter of understanding on the proposed venture," Mr. Teem told Al Ittihad newspaper in the United Arab Emirates (UAE).

He said the network would involve a 1,330-kilometre pipeline, which will have a capacity of 114,000 cubic metres a day. The project will start in 2001 and have an operational life of 20 years.

The Doha-based GOIC, which advises on industrial policies in the 17-year-old Gulf economic, political and defence alliance, has completed studies on the project, the first of its kind in the Middle East.

GOIC has said the dual pipeline would originate from Qatar, which has the world's biggest single gas reservoir in its North Field, with an estimated 10 trillion cubic metres of natural gas.

The first gas line would pass through Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Kuwait, and the second through Oman and Dubai in the UAE.

Experts said Dubai, which has no gas, would be a key beneficiary of the project, while large quantities would also be supplied to Kuwait and Saudi Arabia given their limited non-associated gas resources.

The project would be financed proportionately by the GCC governments but officials have spoken of plans to admit the private sector.

Gas consumption in the GCC countries is growing rapidly as they gradually switch to the cleaner source of energy.

The GCC's combined gas reserves are estimated at more than 24 trillion cubic metres, accounting for nearly 18 per cent of the world's total gas wealth.

Japan's economic condition 'very, very severe'— official

TOKYO (AFP) — Japan's economy is now in a "very, very severe" condition, the economic planning chief has admitted, signalling that recession was just around the corner.

Koji Omi, director-general of the Economic Planning Agency, warned the economy may have shrunk over the current financial year.

"The conditions of the economy at present are very, very severe as GDP (gross domestic product) may show negative growth for the year to March 1998," he told reporters.

He said the 0.2 per cent contraction in GDP for the three months to December was expected.

The government forecast of 0.1 per cent real GDP growth in the year to March 1998 would be difficult to achieve, he admitted.

"We have to monitor the economy to see if growth falls into negative territory and the situation is very sensitive."

But Mr. Omi said sentiment was recovering compared with the situation in December, as signalled by the recent gains in share prices.

He also said that the government forecast of 1.9 per cent in real GDP growth for the year to March 1999 was attainable, with further deregulation expected and with the impact of recent tax cuts.

Separately the Bank of Japan, in its monthly report, said there was little chance of an imminent recovery in domestic demand.

The situation "remains stagnant, while downward pressure on the economy is increasing," it said.

Housing investment was still weak and public investment falling, it warned. "A tangible recovery in domestic demand is hardly foreseeable for some time."

Small and medium-sized companies were now struggling to raise money, strangled by Japan's credit crunch.

MEDICAL EQUIPMENT OFFICE. THE SOLE AGENT OF PRODUCTS OF YVES SAINT LAURENT/ TAHER HUDHOD

THE NEWLY produced perfume of Yves Saint Laurent "Love at the first sight" is now in the Jordanian market. The aspiring perfume "In love again" for 1998 is a historic event for Yves Saint Laurent which celebrates its 40th anniversary this year.

Forty years of creativity, innovation and production. This year is characterised by introducing a new perfume as well as a batch of new make-ups: lipsticks, eyelid colours (kohl), eyeshadows to beautify eyes.

"In love again" is once again a perfume that evokes emotions and creates imagination.

A collection of the best perfumes, with flower and fruit odors. "In love again" is the essence of Yves Saint Laurent's perfumes. It is a group of colours with a message of love that holds the signature of Yves Saint Laurent.

AMMAN FINANCIAL MARKET

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	PAST 12 MONTHS HIGH	LOW	COMPANY'S NAME	P / E	DIV.	NO. OF TRANS.	NO. OF SHARES	VALUE TRADED JD	OPEN PRICE	CLOSE PRICE	CHANGE
	346.000	250.000	ARAB BANK	13.8	1.19	31	920	310785	336.00	336.50	3.50-
+	2.340	1.680	JOR.NATIONAL BK.	E	0.00	67	56769	95465	1.69	1.66	.03-
+S	3.540	1.330	BANK OF JORDAN	4.2	0.00	7	1254	1655	1.35	1.32	.03-
	1.300	.890	MID.EAST INV.BK.	63.7	0.00	1	1000	970	1.02	.97	.05-
S	2.680	1.650	INDUSTRIAL DEV.BK.	10.3	6.07	4	3650	6276	1.72	1.72	-
	5.300	4.650	THE HOUSING BK.	29.3	1.96	17	31250	152551	4.85	4.90	.05+
S	4.180	1.820	JOR.KUWAIT BANK	.9	0.00	9	101521	187812	1.90	1.84	.06-
	.920	.620	JOR.GULF BANK	3.9	10.77	12	21750	14278	.66	.65	.01-
S	4.020	1.960	JOR.ISLAMIC BANK	10.0	4.87	8	1657	3673	1.99	1.97	.02-
	1.400	.800	BEIT.AL-MAL (BEITNA)	.6	16.85	2	1000	890	.90	.89	.01-
	BANK SECTOR TOTALS		INDEX: 233.01	%CHG: -0.39		159	220986	774383			
	2.400	1.590	JOR FRENCH INSUR.	5.4	12.95	4	2700	5226	1.96	1.93	.03-
	INSURANCE SECTOR TOTALS		INDEX: 121.44	%CHG: -0.14		4	2700	5228			
	2.140	1.550	JOR.ELECTRIC PWR.	9.7	5.00	13	3950	7914	2.02	2.00	.02-
	4.030	1.320	IRBID ELECTRICITY	12.3	5.56	1	100	207	2.15	2.07	.08-
	1.550	.930	NATL. PORTFOLIO	41.5	0.00	21	16500	16947	1.06	3.04	.02-
	.590	.370	JORDAN INTL.TRAD.	19.5	0.00	1	250	95	.38	.36	-
	4.600	2.890	ARAB INTL.INV.EDUC.	10.6	1.87	1	1000	4280	4.35	4.26	.07-
	1.090	.900	ZARKA EDUCATION	9	0.00	2	400	374	.95	.93	.02-
+	1.830	1.570	UNIFIED CO.	6.9	7.05	5	1500	2340	1.58	1.56	.02-
	.810	.600	UNION LAND DEV.	9	0.00	4	4500	2990	.67	.66	.01-
	1.350	.890	UNITED FOR FINAN.INV	.8	10.47	1	250	293	1.23	1.17	.06-
	SERVICE SECTOR TOTALS		INDEX: 118.45	%CHG: -0.74		49	28450	35439			
	1.160	.930	ATTAQEEB	9	0.00	1	10000	11000	1.10	1.10	-
	4.450	2.690	JOR. CEMENT FACT.	18.4	4.01	35	20839	57077	2.78	2.74	.04-
	7.050	5.620	ARAB POTASH CO.	14.1	3.30	7	21500	124700	5.85	5.80	.05-
	11.160	9.200	JOR. PETROL.REFINARY	10.2	8.46	3	2040	22420	10.60	10.51	.09-
	2.480	1.100	INDUSTRIAL COMM.AGR.	9	0.00	1	100	113	1.13	1.13	-
	5.700	3.440	ARAB PHARM. MANF.	14.2	3.89	57	16606	85713	5.19	5.14	.05-
S	7.200	2.100	JOR.CERAMIC IND.	4.3	4.76	1	250	525	2.10	2.10	-
	1.530	1.020	JOR.PIPES MANFCT.	15.1	6.56	3	1400	1708	1.22	1.22	-
	2.330	1.800	GENERAL MINING	E	3.55	1	250	493	2.07	1.97	.10-
S	1.420	.770	RAFIA INDUSTRIES	9	0.00	1	250	205	.82	.82	-
	6.350	4.400	DAR ALDAWA DV.INV.	14.9	4.10	7	7700	46970	6.12	6.10	.02-
	3.460	2.220	ARAB ALUM. IND.	6.3	9.23	1	1000	2710	2.70	2.71	.01+
	.590	.400	LIVESTOCK & POULTRY	10.4	0.00	24	20600	10190	.50	.49	.01-
	1.110	.680	ARAB PAPER CONV.IND.	22.3	0.00	1	200	146	.75	.73	.02-
	.630	.510	NATIONAL INDS.	9	0.00	10	5100	2810	.56	.55	.01-
	.930	.370	INTERMED.PETRO.CHEM.	9	0.00	14	10050	4234	.43	.42	.01-
	.750	.500	JOR. ROCKWOOL INDS.	9	0.00	6	1950	1030	.53	.53	-
	2.250	1.380	UNIV.CHEM.INDS.	12.8	7.04	3	450	639	1.45	1.42	.03-
S	3.000	.920	NATL.CABLE WIRE.MFAC	27.9	0.00	9	7300	8726	1.19	1.16	.03-
	1.080	.810	JOR. NEW CABLE CO.	18.5	0.00	49	118450	118540	1.02	1.01	.01-
	1.880	1.290	EL -JAY READY WEAR	46.8	0.00	8	4750	6393	1.37	1.33	.04-
	1.250	1.080	INTL. TOBACCO	6.6	0.00	12	13450	15867	1.18	1.18	-
	1.220	.860	UNION CH. & VEG.	46.4	0.00	13	9750	10015	1.03	1.02	.01-
	.850	.660	JORDAN STEEL	35.7	6.33	34	84100	66656	.79	.79	-
	.820	.570	MID.EAST COMPLEX	7.6	16.13	19	81150	50602	.64	.62	.02-
	INDUSTRIAL SECTOR TOTALS		INDEX: 109.78	%CHG: -0.86		391	532382	734768			
	GRAND TOTAL		INDEX: 166.58	%CHG: -0.56		603	784518	1549818			

PARALLEL MARKET SHARE PRICE LIST FOR SUNDAY 22/03/1998

N	1.050	.910	EXPORT & FIN.BNK.75%	17.2	0.00	1	3500	2380	.93	.93	-
	.530	.340	JOR.TRADE FAC.	g	0.00	4	23000	8970	.39	.39	-
	.700	.480	NATL.CORNER.CENTERS	E	0.00	1	1000	660	.66	.66	-
	.800	.660	UNION INV. 50%	g	0.00	19	76250	18300	.74	.74	-
	.620	.360	ARAB FIN.INVEST.	g	0.00	43	131035	60750	.45	.47	.02+
	.780	.610	AL-DAWLIYAH 75%	65.3	0.00	2	13000	5590	.68	.68	-
N	2.220	1.050	CENTURY INV. GROUP	E	0.00	4	40000	80000	2.00	2.00	-
	1.000	.850	ARAB JOR.INVEST.CO.	17.0	5.00	3	10500	9988	1.00	1.00	-
	.640	.370	ARAB FOOD & MED.	g	0.00	3	3000	1440	.47	.48	.01+
	.470	.240	ARAB INTL.INV.TRD.	42.6	0.00	45	183350	66612	.36	.37	.01+
	.750	.360	NATL.HOST.ENG.MANICO	g	0.00	30	229850	91555	.39	.38	.01-
	.600	.310	NAYZAK SPINS & WOVENS	g	0.00	1	250	103	.43	.41	.02-
	.520	.400	ARAB ELECT.INDS.	g	0.00	1	700	287	.41	.41	-
	.690	.580	MIDEAST PHARM. 90%	E	0.00	5	3250	1788	.65	.65	-
	1.500	.860	UNION TOBACCO 75%	g	0.00	4	14158	15999	1.45	1.38	.07-
	.730	.550	RASI PHARM.	E	0.00	3	4100	2911	.71	.71	-
	.460	.240	INDS. ENG.	g	0.00	17	29550	8891	.30	.31	.01+
	.830	.510	INDS. CERAMIC	13.9	0.00	6	3450	1626	.53	.53	-
N	.950	.550	ADVANCED PHARMA.IND.	E	0.00	12	14727	9434	.64	.64	-
	.640	.370	PEARL SAN. P. CONT.	E	0.00	1	2750	1100	.39	.40	.01+
+	.740	.490	NATL. POULTRY	E	0.00	21	25000	12000	.49	.46	.01-
N	.950	.470	OFFICALE BEARING 75%	E	0.00	2	1200	420	.60	.60	-
N	1.000	.660	NAT.ALUMINIUM. 75%	94.6	0.00	2	500	215	.68	.68	-
N	1.000	.750	EXBAL PRINT CO. 75%	13.5	8.51	3	4000	2560	.90	.69	.01-
	GRAND TOTAL					234	818130	403787			

HOROSCOPE

FORECAST FOR MONDAY, MARCH 23, 1998

By Linda C. Black, Tribune Media Services, Inc.

ARIES: (March 21 to April 19) Expect to run into an argument from a charming person. You and he or she have sort of a love-hate relationship. You get yourselves pretty mad, but it's really fun to make up. If you don't have a friend like this, go find one. They usually hang out at art galleries or coffee houses. A feisty argument will be good for you.

TAURUS: (April 20 to May 20) It's a good day to do paperwork. Unfortunately, that's one of your least favourite things to do. Well, don't feel like your whole weekend has to be ruined. Look at it as an investment of time that could save you quite a bit of money. Have you done your taxes yet? That would be an excellent place to start.

GEMINI: (May 21 to June 21) A person from far away will have an idea that could launch you into a whole new adventure. Later tonight another change could take place. This suggestion comes from a partner. It's so outrageous you can hardly believe your ears. That's especially true when you agree to do it. If it's not illegal or fattening, you should be fine.

CANCER: (June 22 to July 21) How long has it been since you've written your mother a long letter? Even if you see her everyday, she'd love to get one. The words should come pretty easily. There are lots of Cancerian poets, you know. They usually write about cozy domestic scenes, peaceful seashores, of all things, mothers.

LEO: (July 22 to August 21) You're probably a little sick and tired of responsibility by now. You never thought you'd live to see the day, but this could be it. Well, you're in luck. All you have to do is lay around and read books. You're learning more quickly, and there's probably something you've been meaning to learn right now.

VIRGO: (August 22 to September 22) This is a good day for shopping. You'll come home with lots of absolutely gorgeous things that everybody wonders how you can afford. Truth is, you can't afford it. That's OK. Sometimes a shopping spree is the very thing you need to get motivated to make more money. Have a great time while you're at it.

LIBRA: (September 23 to October 22) An intellectual relationship could take a romantic turn. It's up to you, which is how you like it. The best place for an interlude is your own home, and the best person have it with is someone who likes to tell you what to do. Did we just say you're in control? You are! Part of being a good leader is knowing when to follow.

SCORPIO: (October 23 to November 21) Somebody's telling you what to do. He or she is like an annoying fly buzzing around you. Just let this person rant. You'll end up doing what you want anyway. If what you wanted was to stay home and fix up things around the house, your wishes will coincide with the other person's. Might as well. It'll cut down on the noise pollution.

SAGITTARIUS: (November 22 to December 21) It's a party weekend. There might be a little stress on your pocketbook, but not to worry. You've earned a celebration. Your biggest problem is an overabundance of opportunities. So many invitations, so little time. Well, it really doesn't matter. You'll have a great time no matter which way you go.

CAPRICORN: (December 22 to January 20) Your whole day may be planned out in advance. In fact, you might not get much time for yourself all weekend. Are you going home to visit with family? They may have expectations you don't share, but you'll have a good time anyway. You're in such a good mood, you won't even be able to help it.

AQUARIUS: (January 21 to February 19) This is a wonderful weekend for a romantic excursion. Take your sweetheart to the most beautiful place you can find. If he or she is in a cranky mood, just do what you can to make things pleasant. Gentle music would be a good start. It might also help to do whatever your friend wants. That's a nice Valentine's Day gift.

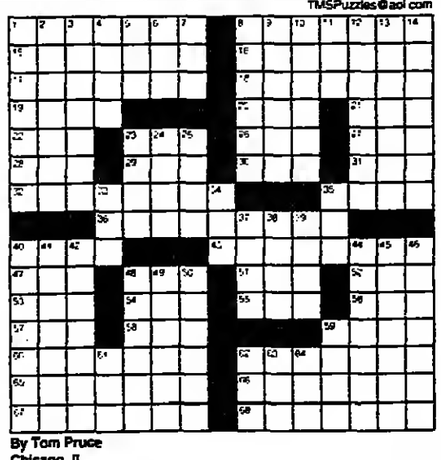
PISCES: (February 20 to March 20) How about taking your true love shopping? He or she would love it. You're more likely to spend too much than the other person is, if you're with the right person. The right mate for a Pisces should always be somebody with good common sense. An older person might have a surprise for you later tonight, too.

Birthstone of March: Aquamarine — Jasper

THE Daily Crossword

Edited by Wayne Robert Williams

TMSPuzzles@aol.com



ACROSS
1 "Waiting to Exhale" star Angela
9 Injures
15 Remove wrapping
16 Translucent, milky glass
17 Majestic
18 Studies again
19 Hardens
20 Vex
21 Divide the deck
22 Explosive letters
23 Droop
26 Winning service in tennis
27 Mineral in the raw
28 Washington's bill
29 Columnist Landers
30 Kernel
31 Encountered
32 Of mom and/or dad
35 Makes a lawn
36 Say again
40 Turner of tunes
43 Maladies
47 Excitement
48 Actress Thurman
51 Cave dwelling
52 Explore
53 Pop group, __ Speedwagon
54 Collide intentionally
55 Break fast?
56 Sch. org
57 Frenzied
58 Short cut?
59 Part of QED
60 Roman greeting
62 Sports figure
65 Sanitize
66 Water racer
67 Methods
68 Have

DOWN
1 Marilyn Monroe movie
2 Insect's feeler
3 Spread far and wide
4 Drunkards
5 First wife?
6 __ Aviv, Israel
7 Make an attempt
8 "The Picture of __ Gray"
9 Brief summary
10 Grocery store
11 Alternative to lager
12 Composer Puccini
13 Withstood
14 Sonnet stanzas
23 In one's right mind
24 Against: pref.
25 Pesky insect
33 End of an __
34 Showed the way
35 Sargasso __
37 Take the bus
38 Sailing
39 Temporary shelter
40 Road surfaces
41 Under the best conditions
42 Paula
44 Paramount
45 Wills' contents
46 Ushers, at times
48 Effortlessly gracious
49 The Chairman's philosophy
50 Walks easily
58 Blighted trees
61 Head cover
62 Egyptian cobra
63 Couple
64 That guy's

By Tom Pruce
Chicago, IL

D	O	D	O	R		I	R	I	S	H		P	E	T	E
D	I	R	E		S	A	N	T	O		U	R	A	L
D	I	A	B	O	L	I	C	A	L		R	I	T	A
S	I	T		P	E	D	A	G	O	G	I	C	A	L
		O	P	E	D				G	O	T			
R	E	R	A	N			V	E	R	B	A	T	I	M
E	M	I	R			C	O	M	A		N	Y	S	E
F	I	I	C	A		G	R	I	M	M		I	R	E	S
E	L	A	M		R	I	C	A			C	I	A	R	A
R	E	L	E	G	A	T	E			W	A	N	E	S
			D	I	N				K	I	L	N		
C	Y	L	I	N	D	R	I	C	A	L		I	M	P
L	A	I	C		M	O	N	A	S	T	I	C	A	L
O	L	I	L	A		A	M	I	S	H		N	A	T	O
D	E	A	L		L	A	T	K	A		S	L	E	W

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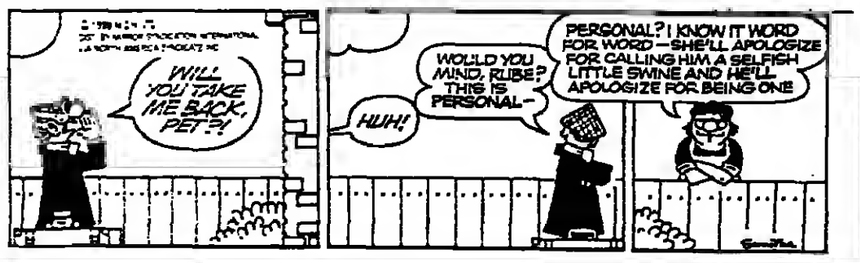
Peanuts

Andy Capp



Mutt'n'Jeff

THE BETTER HALF®

By Glasbergen

"Men love sports, so I give my husband 10 points for a hug, 20 points for a kiss...."

JUMBLE®

THAT SCRAMBLED WORD GAME by Henri Arnold and Mike Argirion

Unscramble these four Jumbles, one letter to each square, to form four ordinary words.

DUFAR

VUREC

BOYDUL

BUCTAD

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Now arrange the circled letters to form the surprise answer, as suggested by the above cartoon.

Answer: A

(Answers tomorrow)

Saturday's Jumbles: DOWDY ALIAS HECTIC CHOSEN
Answer: A productive dairy herd becomes this — A CASH COW

Daily Beat

A review of news from the Arabic Press

Al Dustour dividends will be at the rate of 23%

** FOLLOWING THE approval of the general assembly, the Jordan Press and Publishing Company / Al Dustour will distribute dividends to shareholders at a rate of 23 per cent. The company earned a total of JD5.91 million but net profit amounted to JD567,000 after deducting JD5.35 million in total expenditures.

According to the annual report, the net profit for 1997 was 12 per cent higher than the amount posted in 1996 despite losing the income from printing many weekly newspapers which stopped publishing last year. The company paid JD425,000 in sales tax and JD350,000 in customs, the annual report showed.

The report revealed that the company had JD685,000 in deposits at banks and that investments have increased by around JD740,000. The indebtedness of the company which publishes the Arabic daily Al Dustour dropped from JD968,000 at the end of 1996 to JD758,000 at the end of 1997.

Other financial data included the rise in shareholders equity from JD4.25 million to JD4.66 million which represents 69 per cent of the total liabilities. The total assets at the end of last year stood at JD6.7 million compared to JD6.45 million at the end of 1996.

The Social Security Corporation owns 30 per cent of the company's capital (Al Dustour).

Mamser: One million Jordanians are poor

** SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT Minister Mohammad Khair Mamser said in a recent lecture that it is imperative to find a solution to low wages in the next five-year development plan because under such low pay, "we will continue to have poor people." He indicated that through the "social safety package," the government will carry out infrastructure projects at 330 rural/badia sites and 28 unorganised housing areas in order to improve the living conditions there and contribute to easing the problems of poverty and unemployment.

According to statistics, around JD140 million, provided by the government and the private sector, were spent last year on social activities. The minister said the government is about to review the social programmes in order to move to "higher productivity programmes" and to provide work or a loan for a vocational project that can earn its owner an acceptable living conditions.

Dr. Mamser revealed that between eight per cent and nine per cent of the population are under the poverty line. "At least, there are 400,000 poor individuals or 50,000 families needed direct care," he said adding: "The rate of the limited income people is around 22 per cent."

As such, the minister emphasised, there are around one million poor individuals in the Kingdom. "This is not a secret because according to a formula to measure poverty, a family of eight persons earning JD150 is considered a family below the poverty line" (Al Aswaq).

Housing Bank seen sharpening competition among banks

By Tareq Ayyoub
Special to the Jordan Times

AMMAN — The Housing Bank's decision to double its capital to JD100 million will instigate a competition between commercial banks in the country to attract deposits from clients, economists and bankers said Sunday.

"It was a correct step in the right direction," said leading economist Tayseer Abdul Jaber. "We should have larger banks who are able to contest with foreign financial institutions, especially amid the liberalisation policy in the banking sector."

Dr. Abdul Jaber was responding to the Housing Bank announcement on Saturday to increase its capital from JD50 million to JD100 million, which will be secured through the capitalisation of premiums collected from issuing shares.

"The competition will grow for deposits. All will compete to give good services to the public," Dr. Abdul Jaber told the Jordan Times.

"With this decision, the Housing Bank will be capable to expand its operations and will be able to compete with other commercial banks," the economist said.

Dr. Abdul Jaber hinted that the new decision might instigate merger between the smaller commercial banks in the country.

"This has nothing to do with the size of the bank but rather with the efficiency of the management of each commercial bank," Dr. Abdul Jaber said.

"I believe that with the Housing Bank decision, smaller banks will resort to increasing their capitals or merge," he added.

"Some of the smaller banks will resort to compulsory merger to compete with the larger ones because they lack enough liquidity that would enable them to compete," said former Central Bank Assistant Governor Mohammad Jaser.

"If they receive good incentives from the Council of Ministers and the Central Bank, it will be easy for them to merge," Mr. Jaser said.

He indicated that the Housing Bank's decision would enable it to finance development projects in the country and compete with foreign financial institutions in this field.

"The bank's role should not be confined to giving loans and getting interest on it and commission on other banking services," Mr. Jaser said. "It should expand its activities to include financing profit-making projects, especially in the electricity and water sectors in the country."

"A bank should also create qualitative credit facilities to attract more deposits in the country as well as expanding its local market," Mr. Jaser said.

"I do not feel that there is a need to open branches in foreign countries. There are projects in Jordan, especially those related to the Jordan Rift Valley, where local banks can compete with foreign financiers to extend soft loans," he added.

But a well-known banker, who asked not to be named, said the Housing Bank's 1998 profits should match the new increase of its capital.

"By raising the capital, the net profit of the Housing Bank should be around JD60 million. The question is: Can they do it?" asked the banker.

"If they resort to expand their activities outside the country and explore new markets, especially in the region, I think the answer is yes," he said.

"This is a challenge to the bank which it should boldly face," the banker added.

In 1997, the Housing Bank recorded JD16 million net profit compared with JD8 million in the previous year.

Meanwhile, the Housing Bank's decision to double its capital failed to draw more demand to its shares at the Amman Financial Market, figures showed Sunday.

Only 31,250 shares changed hands in the market compared with 47,731 shares during Saturday's trading.

The shares were among seven firms at the AFM that managed to record an increase in price with an opening and closing rates of JD4.85 and JD4.90 respectively.

Gulf Air recovers after catastrophic performance in '96

ABU DHABI (AFP) — The Gulf aviation company Gulf Air said its 1997 profits reached $48 million after sustaining losses of $156 million in 1996.

The company managed to reduce its debt from $1.5 billion to $640 million by the end of 1997, the official United Arab Emirates news agency quoted Ahmed Ibn Seif Al Nahyan, the director of Gulf Air, as saying.

This was made possible by selling off 17 planes and suppressing inefficient flights, he said following a meeting of the administrative board.

Gulf Air is owned in equal parts by Bahrain, Qatar, Oman and Abu Dhabi (one of the United Arab Emirates).

"For the moment we don't intend to raise the company's capital by appealing to the owner countries but we hope to increase it with future profits," he said.

"The company is studying opening new routes to increase its profits," added the director.

In order to cover its losses, Gulf Air has had to dip into its capital which fell to $304 million in 1996 against $570 million initial capital when the company was created in 1974. The company's owners have had to lend it an additional $200 million since the start of 1997.

The airline also had to cancel an order for six Boeing 777 planes but kept up an order for six Airbus A330-300 planes, four of which will be delivered in June and July this year and the other two in 2001.

The Gulf Air fleet currently comprises 17 Airbuses, comprising 13 A320-300s and four A340-300s, and 11 Boeing 767-300s.

The airline director added that the administrative board had approved the company's 1998 budget but gave no details of its contents.

Egyptian-Yemeni company to build island resort

CAIRO (AFP) — An Egyptian-Yemeni consortium is to build a large hotel resort on the Yemeni island of Socotra, where the Indian Ocean and the Gulf of Aden meet, the Egyptian company Orascom has said.

The project is to be developed by Orascom and the Yemeni company Hayel Said, said Samih Sauiriss of Orascom.

"Representatives of both companies recently carried out a survey of the island to determine what infrastructure was necessary to carry out the project," said Mr. Sauiriss, who declined to say how much the development would cost.

He said the project would be carried out with help from the World Bank, which would build an airport on the island and a road linking it to the hotel complex.

Mr. Sauiriss said the consortium was now only awaiting the written agreement of the Yemeni government to begin the project, adding that at first five or six hotels would be built.

The 130 kilometre-long island has a population of between 40,000 and 70,000 — most of whom are nomads or fishermen.

It is around 200 kilometres off the Somali coast.

REUTERS REUTERS

The Business of Information

Major Currencies & Cross Rates — Prices as at 22/03/98 18:43

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY	CAD	ITL	NLG	FRF
US Dollar	-	1.8317	0.5998	1.4980	130.30	1.4175	1802.00	2.0634	6.1350
DE Mark	0.5459	-	0.3272	0.8178	71.14	0.7737	983.52	1.1264	3.3489
GB Sterling	1.6670	3.0543	-	2.4972	217.30	2.3630	3003.93	3.4397	10.2270
CH Franc	0.6676	122.19	0.3999	-	86.96	0.9456	1202.13	137.65	4.0927
JP Yen	0.0077	1.4047	0.4598	1.1488	-	1.0870	13.82	158.24	4.7048
CA Dollar	0.7055	1.2917	0.4228	1.0564	1.09	-	1270.80	1.4551	4.3265
IT Lira	0.0006	1.0159	0.3325	0.0831	1384.66	0.7862	-	11.44	3.4027
NL Guilder	0.4846	88.75	0.2905	72.60	63.11	0.6868	873.10	-	2.9725
FR Franc	0.1630	0.2985	0.0977	24.4193	21.22	0.2310	33.53	33.6300	-

Middle Eastern Currencies

Currency	USD	JOD	SAR	BAH	QAT	KUW	AED	LBP	EGP
US Dollar	-	0.7090	3.7508	0.3770	3.6400	0.3064	3.6726	1527.70	3.4000
Jordan Dinar	1.4104	-	5.2903	0.5317	5.1340	0.4307	5.1800	2154.72	4.7954
Saudi Riyal	0.2666	0.1890	-	0.1005	0.97	0.0814	0.98	407.30	0.9065
Bahrain Dinar	2.65	1.8806	9.9491	-	9.66	0.8101	9.74	4052.25	9.0185
Qatar Dinar	0.2747	0.1948	1.0304	1.0304	-	0.0839	1.01	419.70	0.9341
Kuwait Dinar	3.2745	2.3216	12.2820	1.2345	11.92	-	12.03	5002.46	0.9341
Emirates Dinar	0.2723	0.1931	1.0213	0.1027	0.9911	0.0832	-	415.97	0.9258
Lebanese/1000	0.65	0.4641	2.4552	0.2468	2.3827	0.1999	2.4040	-	2.2255
Egyptian	0.2941	0.2085	1.1032	0.1109	1.0706	0.0898	1.0802	449.33	-

Energy

Oils	Last	revious
Brent	12.38	12.26
W. Texas	14.27	14.39
Bonny	12.38	12.26
Dubai	10.85	10.90
UL Gas	139.00	138.00

Mid-East Currencies

Currency	USD	DEM	GBP	CHF	JPY
SA Riyal	0.2666	0.4885	0.15993	0.39965	34.7657
AE Dirham	0.2723	0.49888	0.16334	0.40816	35.5063
KW Dinar	3.2745	5.9988	1.96425	4.90916	426.985
BH Dinar	0.3770	4.85909	1.59109	3.97814	345.901
CY Pound	1.8679	3.4214	1.1198	2.7981	243.387

*** JOD Cross Rates**

Currency	Buy	Sell
US Dollar	0.708	0.710
GB Sterling	1.1802	1.1861
DE Mark	0.3861	0.388
CH Franc	0.4719	0.4743
FR Franc	0.1153	0.1159
JP Yen	0.5439	0.5466
NL Guilder	0.3427	0.3444
IT Lira	0.3924	0.3944

* Source: Central Bank of Jordan.

Libor Fixing

Period C'ncy	- 1 - Month	- 3 - Months	- 6 - Months	- 1 - Year
USD	5.7255	5.7266	5.7422	5.8516
GBP	7.4844	7.5521	7.5521	7.5573
JPY	0.7969	0.7344	0.7031	0.6875
DEM	3.5625	3.6859	3.6483	3.8046
FRF	3.5254	1.3958	1.4896	1.6250
CHF	1.3333	3.6898	3.6875	3.8594
ITL	5.6940	5.5400	5.1390	-

Main Equity Indices

Bourse	Index	Value	Chng	% Chng	High	Low	Pr Cls
NewYork	DOW JONES	8906.43	103.38	1.17	8913.41	8803.3	8803.05
Newyork	S&P 500	1099.18	9.42	0.86	1101.04	1089.39	1089.74
London	FT-SE 100	5956.3	-41.6	-0.69	5105.8	5880.9	5997.9
Tokyo	NIKKIE 225	16830.47	151.45	0.91	16878.9	16470	16679
Paris	CAC 40	3688.91	0.23	0.01	3717.32	3676.27	3688.68
Frankfurt	DAX	5001.56	65.23	1.32	5014.9	4992.32	4936.32

United Nations Development Programme
JOB ANNOUNCEMENTS

The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) in Jordan is inviting interested individuals to submit applications for the following three positions within the Project Implementation Unit (PIU) of the Ministry of Labour's Training and Employment Support Project (TESP), within the Jordanian Government's Social Productivity Programme (SPP):

Procurement Officer

Under the guidance of the PIU Project Director, the Procurement Officer will:
- ensure full knowledge and systematic application of the procurement and contracting regulations and procedures of the World Bank;
- ensure familiarity with the procurement regulations of the Government of Jordan (GOJ) and participating donors;
- carry out all procurement and contracting tasks of the PIU;
- prepare standard bidding documents and contracts for all goods and services to be procured under the project in accordance with World Bank guidelines;
- familiarize key staff of counterpart ministries and agencies with the procurement guidelines of the World Bank;
- act as a support and reference person for all project-related tasks;
- submit quarterly procurement progress reports to the PIU Project Director;
- perform other tasks as may reasonably be requested by the PIU Project Director.

The Procurement Officer should have the following qualifications:
- a graduate degree or equivalent in business administration, finance or a related discipline;
- five to ten years experience (preferably within the private sector) as a procurement specialist;
- familiarity with public procurement practices;
- good organizational and procurement skills;
- complete fluency in both Arabic and English;

Finance Officer

Under the guidance of the PIU Project Director, the Finance Officer will:
- manage all project funds and administer financial resources of the project, including the monitoring of project accounts and costs;
- handle all implementation arrangements related to disbursement, audits, and accounts;
- coordinate finance operations with counterpart ministries and agencies;
- monitor all disbursement activities under the project and ensure timely preparation and submission of disbursement applications to the World Bank;
- maintain separate annual audits of all project accounts;
- submit quarterly disbursement progress reports to the PIU Project Director;
- perform other tasks as may reasonably be requested by the PIU Project Director.

The Financial Officer should have the following qualifications:
- a graduate degree or equivalent in finance, business management or accounting;
- five to ten years experience (preferably within private sector) in the administration of large accounts;
- familiarity with international as well as public accounting and auditing practices;
- good organizational and presentation skills;
- complete fluency in both Arabic and English.

Project Assistant

Under the direction of the PIU Project Director, the Project Assistant will:
- assist in all aspects of project implementation, including procurement, disbursement and reporting;
- assist in the preparation of bidding documents and contracts and in the maintenance of financial records, etc.;
- assist in the promotion and information campaigns of the project;
- conduct background analysis for all technical-related tasks of the PIU;
- maintain a database of all project transactions, financial and otherwise;
- perform other tasks as may be reasonably requested by the PIU Project Director.

The Project Assistant should have the following qualifications:
- a graduate degree or equivalent in business, computer sciences or a related discipline;
- three to five years experience in project management, preferably in the private sector;
- knowledge of basic computer skills, including project management software;
- complete fluency in both Arabic and English.

All applications should specify the position applied for and be received in the UNDP office no later than 2 April 1998 in an envelope marked Ministry of Labour Project. Short-listed candidates will be expected to take a written test and appear before an interview panel.

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Suns upset Sonics 109-102

MINNEAPOLIS (AP) — Stephon Marbury, after being criticised for shooting too much and passing too little, had 15 points and 13 assists Saturday night as the Minnesota Timberwolves defeated the Vancouver Grizzlies 102-88.

Marbury went 6-for-10 from the field and sparked a key fourth-quarter rally for the Wolves, who swept the four-game season series from Vancouver.

Kevin Garnett scored 22 points, Sam Mitchell had 18 and Anthony Peeler 17 as the Wolves shot 53.1 per cent from the field en route to their second straight victory after losing four in a row.

Shareef Abdur-Rahim tied his season high with 31 points, but was held to nine after halftime as the Grizzlies dropped their seventh straight.

• **Rockets 103, Mavericks 95:** In Dallas, Charles Barkley had 23 points and 13 rebounds, Hakeem Olajuwon added 21 points and 12 rebounds and Houston extended its winning streak to six games.

Matt Maloney had 19 points and Clyde Drexler 18 to help the Rockets to a five-game season sweep of the Mavericks.

Michael Finley's 26 points and Shawn Bradley's 23 points and nine rebounds paced the Mavericks, who had won two straight and three of their previous five in their best stretch since opening the season 3-0.

• **Suns 109, SuperSonics 102:** In Phoenix, Cliff Robinson scored 29 points and Rex Chapman added 28 as Phoenix gained its first win in three tries against the SuperSonics this season.

Danny Manning had four of his 25 points in a 25-second span during the final minute, including a backbreaking 18-footer from the baseline with 56 seconds left to open a 105-97 lead.

Gary Payton had 30 points, six rebounds and five assists, but couldn't prevent Seattle (50-17) from falling into a tie with idle Chicago for the best record in the NBA.

• **Cavaliers 100, Clippers 79:** In Los Angeles, Shawn Kemp had 27 points and 13 rebounds and Cedric Henderson added 20 points as Cleveland won its fourth straight.

Maurice Taylor scored 17 points for the Clippers, who have lost their last six meetings with the Cavaliers.

Zydrunas Ilgauskas scored 10 of his 19 points during a 24-7 run in the third quarter to help the Cavaliers extend their 19-point halftime lead to 75-43 with 3:40 left in the period.

Taylor's jam off a missed 3-point shot by Eric Piatkowski, followed by Piatkowski's slam dunk, ended a 10-0 run and narrowed the Clippers' deficit to 18 points with 7:37 remaining. But that was as close as they would get.

Phoenix Suns guard Jason Kidd, (L), puts pressure on Seattle Supersonics guard Gary Payton as he drives toward the basket during first quarter action (Reuters photo)

Morocco refuses Israeli team's visas

JERUSALEM (AFP) — Israel's Amateur Athletic Federation said Saturday it would seek sanctions on Morocco for its refusal to give visas to Israeli athletes wanting to participate in world cross-country championships in Marrakech.

"We will send a letter to the (International Amateur Athletic Federation) asking it to sanction the Moroccan federation following this refusal," the secretary general of the Israeli sport's federation Jacques Cohen told Israeli radio.

He said the Israeli federation also would propose that the games not be called "world championships" because they have excluded Israel.

The Israeli delegation to the Moroccan championships comprises seven athletes, including one woman, and four trainers. It is stranded in Paris because of the Moroccan refusal to give entry visas.

The president of the International Amateur Athletic Federation, Primo Nebiolo called on the Moroccan federation on Friday to see that visas were granted.

Official sources in Rabat said that the refusal to grant visas was a sign of a hardening of Morocco's position toward the Israeli government of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu over the deadlocked Arab-Israeli peace process.

Rostock chasing European spot

BONN (AFP) — With the top sides out of action as police swapped weekend soccer duties for guarding a controversial shipment of nuclear waste, Hansa Rostock took the opportunity to press their European claims, beating MSV Duisburg 2-1.

The win took the easterners into sixth spot, two points behind Stuttgart, who host reigning champions Bayern Munich on Sunday.

With leaders Kaiserslautern without a game, the spotlight fell on the relegation shake-up with Wolfsburg, Karlsruhe and Borussia Moenchengladbach all sliding nearer the trapdoor with defeats.

Wolfsburg, who parted with their trainer Willi Reimann earlier this week, went down 3-1 in Bremen and have taken just two points from their last eight matches.

Two goals by Norwegian striker Havard Flo on 45 and 84 minutes sank the visitors. A 64th minute penalty by Detlef Dammeier had provided a brief flicker of hope but Flo's second goal killed off their challenge.

1860 Munich rallied with a 2-0 over Borussia Moenchengladbach and jumped three spots to 13th — leaving their opponents heading squarely for the drop.

"I am incredibly disappointed," angry Gladbach trainer Norbert Meier said. "Munich didn't play so well in the first half that we had be afraid of them. We just weren't aggressive enough ... what more can I say?"

Gladbach dropped to second from bottom, replacing Hamburg, who climbed out of the bottom three with a 1-0 win in Karlsruhe.

SCOREBOARD

Dutch First Division

De Graafschap	2	FC Volendam	1
PSV Eindhoven	3	Vitesse	2
Willem II	2	MVV	0

Scottish Premier Division

Aberdeen	0	Celtic	1
Dundee Utd	0	Hearts	1
Hibernian	1	Motherwell	0
Kilmarnock	3	Dunfermline	0
Rangers	2	St Johnstone	1

Spanish First Division

Salamanca	5	Atletico	4

French Cup

Quarter-finals:

Paris St Germain	1	Monaco	0
Caen	1	Lens	2

Bundesliga

Werder Bremen	3	Wolfsburg	1
Hansa Rostock	2	MSV Duisburg	1
Karlsruhe	0	SV Hamburg	1
1860 Munich	2	B. Moenchen.	0

Portugeuse First Division

Academica	1	Leca	1
Sporting	2	FC Porto	0
Boavista	4	Belenenses	0

NBA

Minnesota	102	Vancouver	88
Houston	103	Dallas	95
Phoenix	109	Seattle	102
Cleveland	100	L.A. Clippers	79

NHL

Boston	2	Buffalo	1
Los Angeles	3	Phoenix	2
Detroit	4	NY Rangers	3
Pittsburgh	4	Philadelphia	3
Colorado	2	San Jose	0
Tampa Bay	5	Florida	1
Anaheim	5	Montreal	4
New Jersey	3	Washington	2
Toronto	1	Vancouver	1
Edmonton	2	St Louis	0

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Didier Domi (L) of Paris Saint-Germain fights for the control of the ball with Ali Benarbia (R) of Monaco during their French Cup match at the Parc des Princes stadium. Paris Saint-Germain won the match 1-0 (Reuters photo)

PSG move on , Lens win 2-1

PARIS (AFP) — Paris St Germain, who have all but lost out in their league title challenge after a series of poor results this year, swept into the semi-finals of the French Cup on Saturday when they beat visiong Monaco 1-0.

Monaco, who eliminated English Premiership giants Manchester United from the European Champions' Cup in midweek, were sunk by an 'own-goal' by defender Franck Dumas with just 12 minutes left to play.

With speculation rife as to who will replace Ricardo as the Paris St. Germain manager next season, the team could yet salvage something from what has been a bitterly disappointing season — thanks to their Cup form. For they have also qualified for the semi-finals of the French League Cup and play Bordeaux in that competition on April 4.

In Saturday's other quarter-final, high-riding Lens, who are currently chasing Metz for the League title, came away 2-1 winners from second division Caen.

Caen took the lead after just twelve minutes through Raphael Guerreiro but two second-half goals from Czech striker Vladimir Smicer saw Lens through.

On Friday first division Guingamp qualified for the last-four when they beat second division Mulhouse — thanks to a last-gasp goal from Anthony Bancarel in the dying seconds.

The last of the quarter-finals will be played on Sunday with the amateurs of Bourg-Peronnas taking on first division giants Lyon.

GOREN BRIDGE

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THE 11TH PLAGUE

Neither vulnerable. North deals.

NORTH
♠ A J 8 3
♡ K J 10 5 2
♢ A J 4
♣ A

WEST
♠ Void
♡ Q 8 7 6 4
♢ 10 9 7 5 2
♣ 7 3 2

EAST
♠ 10 9 8 7 5 2
♡ Void
♢ Q 9 6 3
♣ 8 6 5

SOUTH
♠ K Q 4
♡ A 9 3
♢ K
♣ K Q J 10 9 4

The bidding:

NORTH	EAST	SOUTH	WEST
1♢	Pass	2♠	Pass
2♠	Pass	4♣	Pass
5♣	Dbl	Rdbl	Pass
Pass	Pass		

Opening lead: Eight of ♡

In the Passover season we are remioded of the 10 plagues that were visited on the Egyptians in days of yore. For rubber bridge players there is an 11th calamity — 100 honors. More crimes have been committed in an attempt to collect those bonus points than we care to list. But the most expensive of all occurred just a few weeks ago in a high-stake Chicago rubber bridge game in New York.

A jump shift to three clubs with the South hand seems automatic, but South decided to leave maximum room for exploration. After North reversed in spades, however, we would simply have checked for aces and, finding three in partner's hand, would have committed the hand to seven no trump. There are 12 top tricks and virtually no possible *holding North could have for a* reverse which would not produce the 13th. As it is, declarer can claim 14 tricks off the top, and that can be increased to 16 with the marked heart finesse. But the lure of 'honors' *tempted South to commit* the hand to clubs, and the double seemed like manna from heaven, hence the redouble.

East's double asked for dummy's first-bid suit, and West was delighted to oblige. The defenders gaily crossruffed three hearts and three spades, for down five — -2200 in the new scoring less 100 honors, instead of +1520 for 13 tricks at seven notrump.

South, able to maintain a sense of humor about the incident, remarked: "This is the first time I have held 150 honors between the two hands and lost six trump tricks!" North was too dumbstruck by the enormity of the catastrophe to comment.

TODAY AT

CINEMA TEL: [illegible]
PHILADELPHIA '1'
Mike Myers & Elizabeth Hurley ... in
AUSTIN POWERS: International Man of Mystery
Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL: [illegible]
PHILADELPHIA '2'
Val Kilmer & Elizabeth Shue... in
THE SAINT
Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:15, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL: [illegible]
PLAZA
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TITANIC
Shows: 12:00, 3:00, 7:00, 10:30 p.m.

CINEMA TEL: 5677420
CONCORD
CONCORD 1
Adel Imam & Yusra ... in
RISALA ILA AL WALI
(ARABIC)
Shows: 12:30, 3:30, 6:00, 8:15, 10:30
CONCORD 2
LONG KISS GOODNIGHT
Shows: 3:30, 6:30, 8:30, 10:30

CINEMA TEL: 5934793
GALLERIA 2
ABDOUN
GRAND OPENING
TITANIC
Shows: 5:15, 8:30
The film is also on at 2:00 p.m. & 12:00 a.m. on Wednesdays, Thursdays and Fridays

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GALLERIA 1
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SPORTS IN BRIEF

Scots hit by injury crisis

GLASGOW (AFP) — Scotland manager Craig Brown's preparations for the World Cup have been hit by an injury crisis ahead of Wednesday's warm-up game against Denmark. Kevin Gallacher, John Collins, Matt Elliott and David Hopkin have all been ruled out of the match at Rangers' Ibrox Stadium. Skipper Gary McAllister has beeo sidelined with a long-term knee injury while Gordon Durie is recovering from a serious head knock. Gallacher has a pelvic injury and Collins a thigh problem. Both Elliott and Hopkin have picked up eye injuries. Brown said: "I may now need to look at promoting players from the B team. At the moment we are down to 19 out of the original 24 — Gordon Durie can't play yet — which means all the remaining 18 outfield players will definitely be involved. "

Trezeguet to miss Russia friendly

PARIS (AFP) — Monaco striker David Trezeguet, whose goal put Manchester United out of the European Champions Cup last week, will miss France's friendly international with Russia in Moscow next Wednesday. Trezeguet injured his knee in Monaco's French Cup quarter-final defeat at Paris St. Germain on Saturday. Monaco's manager Jean Tigana said: "He couldn't walk after the match. We don't know the extend of the injury yet but are keeping our fingers crossed that he will be able to play again next week or the week after."

Cunningham rejoins Vikings

MINNEAPOLIS (AFP) — Veteran American football quarterback Randall Cunningham, who filled in for hurt Minnesota starter Brad Johnson last season, signed a new two-year deal with the Vikings. Cunningham, who led Minnesota to a playoff triumph, will make a reported $2 million with the contract. Cunningham took over as the Vikings starting quarterback for the final three games of the 1997 season after Johnson was diagnosed with a herniated cervical disc in his neck.

Agassi leads U.S. in Davis Cup

KEY BISCAYNE (AFP) — Former World No. 1 Andre Agassi will join Jim Courier, Todd Martin and Richey Reneberg on the United States Davis Cup team that faces Russia next month. The Americans host the opening-round tie April 3-5 at the Atalnta suburb of Stone Mountain, Georgia. Agassi, ranked 31st, can break Bill Tilden's U.S. Davis Cup record for consecutive singles match victories with two triumphs over Russia. Tilden won 16 in a row from 1920 to 1926. Agassi has won 15 in a row dating back to 1991. He owns a 24-4 career Davis Cup mark and 36 career ATP titles, the most recent coming this year at Scottsdale and San Jose. Russia's lineup includes Yevgeny Kafelnikov, Marat Safin, Andre Olhovsky and Alexander Volkov.

Atletico score four goals...and lose

MADRID (AFP) — Atletico's Spanish league title hopes all but disappeared Saturday when they crashed in a nine-goal thriller away to modest Salamanca. Italian striker Christian Vieri scored four times for the UEFA Cup semi-finalists — but it was not enough. For Atletico, who at one stage led 2-0, finally went down 5-4. Edu Alonso scored Salamnaca's winner in injury-time after Popescu and Silvani had kept the home side in the match with two goals apiece.

Battling Celtic stay in pole position

GLASGOW (AFP) — Celtic stayed out in front in the race for the Scottish Premier division crown with a 1-0 victory at Aberdeen on Saturday but rivals Rangers and Hearts kept up the pressure with victories of their own.

Craig Burley's 45th minute spot-kick was enough to keep Celtic two points clear of Hearts, 1-0 winners at Dundee United, and five ahead of Old Firm rivals Rangers who came from behind to beat St Johnstone 2-1.

David Rowson's rash challenge on Frenchman Stephane Mahe created the award to set up the first goal conceded by Aberdeen since Celtic's last visit, the 2-0 win on December 9.

Celtic looked nervous in the second half when 'keeper Jonathan Gould had to be at his best to deny Aberdeen the equaliser their efforts deserved.

But Celtic coach Wim Jansen said he was delighted by his side's battling qualities.

He said: "Winning was the most important thing and to do that we needed to battle and we did that."

Rangers' goal machine Marco Negri, meanwhile, rediscovered his scoring touch as the Ibrox giants kept alive their hopes of a record 10th successive title.

Former Perugia ace Negri scored his first goal in six games to take his tally for the season to 36 after Republic of Ireland international defender Alan Kernaghan had put the visitors ahead on 15 minutes.

Agassi and Korda blow away opponents

KEY BISCAYNE (AFP) — Difficult windy conditions did not prevent Andre Agassi keeping his comeback on the rails and Petr Korda his World No. 1 hopes alive at the Lipton Championships here Saturday.

Agassi scored a one-sided 6-2, 6-3 win over his young second-round French opponent Nicolas Escude in just 67 minutes — and Korda, the Australian Open champion and World No. 2 who is hoping that a good run here will enable him to overtake Pete Sampras in the rankings, needed just three minutes more to eliminate Paraguay's Ramon Delgado 6-2, 7-6 (7/5).

World No. 1 Pete Sampras beat Spain's Javier Sanchez 6-1, 6-2 in a night match.

Agassi's wio could have been even more one-sided had he not lost concentration while leading 4-0 in the second set.

"There was a lot of wind out there and it made good tennis difficult," he said, adding: "I'm sure Escude would have been a different player if the conditioos had been better. But you just have to adapt."

Agassi was not the only player to deplore the conditions.

Brazil's teoth-seeded French Open champion Gustavo Kuerten claimed that the wind had almost made him lose his match against Spain's 150th-ranked Francisco Roig. The South American eventually reached a third-rouod showdown against Andrei Medvedev of the Ukraine — but only after winning a tight third-set tie-break.

France's 14th seed Cedric Piolioe beat Lucas Arnold of Argentina 6-4, 6-3 and came off court describing the blustery conditions as "curious," while Britain's Tim Henman, who defeated South African Grant Stafford 6-4, 6-2, admitted that he had found it difficult to find his length in the wind and claimed that the balls were under-pressurised.

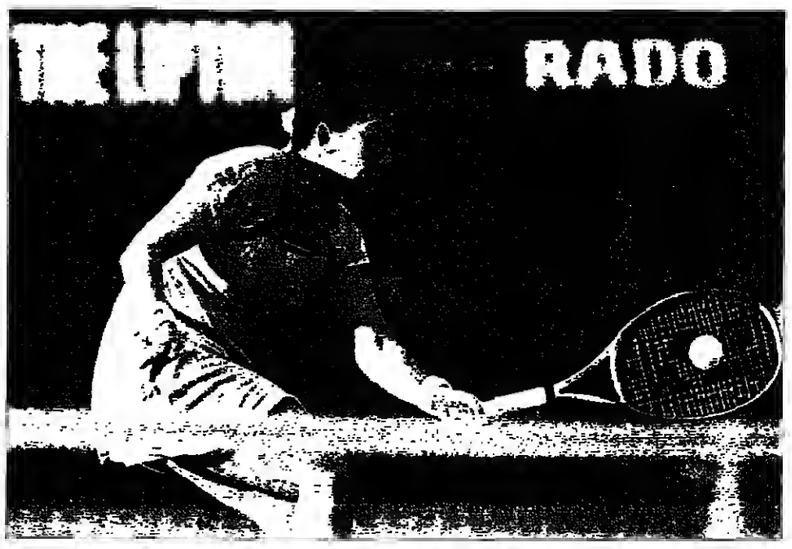
Henman's Davis Cup team-mate and fifth-seed Greg Rusedski, a finalist in Indian Wells last weekend, powered his way past 20-year-old Slovakian Dominik Hrbaty 6-3, 6-1 and seventh-seeded Swede Jonas Bjorkman dropped only seven games io his straight-sets dismissal of India's Leander Paes.

Other seeds safely througb were third-seed Marcelo Rios of Chile and fourteenth seed Carlos Moya of Spain.

Rios saw off Henrik Dreekman of Germany 6-3, 6-4 while Moya beat Australian veteran Mark Woodforde 7-6 (7/2), 6-3.

In the women's tournament, third seeded Czech Jana Novoma raced past Magdalena Grybowska of Poland 6-1, 6-1 and Russian teenager Anna Kournikova defeated promising Mirjana Lucic of Croatia 6-4, 6-2 while second seeded American Lindsay Davenport beat Bulgaria's Pavlina Stoyanova 6-2, 6-2.

Eighth-seed Arantxa Sanchez-Vicario of Spain had to stage a come back after dropping the first set to beat Shi-Ting Wang of Taipei 4-6, 6-4, 6-2, experienced twelfth seed Nathalie Tauziat of France defeated American Anna Wunderlich 7-5, 6-4 and fourteenth-seeded Anke Huber of Germany beat Taipei's Janet Lee 2-6, 6-4, 6-4.



Monica Seles of the United States in action against Maria Antonio Sanchez Lorenzo of Spain during the first set of their second round match at the Lipton Tennis Championships. Seles, who is seeded 5th in the tournament, defeated unseeded Sanchez Lorenzo 6-4 6-7 6-3 (Reuters photo)

Andre Agassi returns a volley from Nicolas Escude of France, during their second round match at the Lipton Tennis Championships. Agassi defeated Escude 6-2 6-3 to advance (Reuters photo)

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2. Programme Assistant:
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- Maintains administrative systems, correspon dence and files for the programme and training section. Translates and prepares routine corre spondence in Arabic and English. Speaking, writing and reading fluency in English and Arabic is required.
- Assists in the delivery of cross cultural training for volunteers.
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Turkish coalition partners seek to resolve crisis with military

ANKARA (AFP) — Turkish Prime Minister Mesut Yilmaz on Sunday met with leaders of two parties in his coalition government to discuss ways to defuse a crisis with the powerful pro-secular army.

The meeting came two days after top army generals issued a tough warning against Mr. Yilmaz, stressing their determination to fight Islamist activism and accusing the cabinet of "inefficiency" in fighting Islamists.

Mr. Yilmaz, head of the conservative Motherland Party, responded by saying he understood the army's bid to act against Islamists but ruled out resigning over the matter despite fears that the army was preparing a coup.

Attending the meeting on Sunday were Turkish Vice-Premier Bulent Ecevit, leader of the nationalist Democratic Left Party, and Husamettin Cindoruk, leader of the centrist Democratic Turkey Party, took part in Sunday's meeting.

The army generals, exasperated by Mr. Yilmaz's public statement last week to back off and mind their own business, stressed in their harshly-worded statement: "It is our constitutional duty to fight religious extremism.

"No one can discourage the army's determination to fight fundamentalism for his personal interests and political ambitions," the top five generals said in their statement, in a clear reference to Mr. Yilmaz.

"The commanders in chief have used one of their democratic rights in making public their views on the fight against fundamentalism," Mr. Yilmaz told the private television channel ATV, in an apparent effort to soothe the generals.

"The government will remain in power... I am the prime minister of a democratic country," he also said.

The military, which played a vital role in forcing an Islamist-led government to resign last year, is not happy with the performance of Mr. Yilmaz's government in fighting Islamist activism.

Military officials have accused Mr. Yilmaz of trying to win the sympathy of religious voters by adopting a soft approach to what they see as the Islamist threat.

The Turkish army has staged three coups in the last 38 years, in 1960, 1971 and 1980, saying that its intention was to protect the state from destructive forces.

The army generals, who see themselves as guardians of Turkey's secular state, launched their anti-Islamist campaign last year during the rule of Islamist ex-Premier Necmettin Erbakan.

U.S. Marines stage landing exercises in Kuwait

KUWAIT CITY (AFP) — Around 1,300 U.S. Marines took part in amphibious landing exercises at a Kuwaiti port on Sunday, a U.S. military spokesman said.

Marines spokesman Gunnery Sergeant Steve Nelson said amphibious craft loaded with Marines, weapons and equipment landed at Shuwaikh port at the start of two-week training exercises.

The Marines will be training on nearby Purple Beach, 30 km north of Kuwait City, the spokesman told reporters, adding that Kuwaiti forces could take part in the exercises at a later stage.

In separate manoeuvres, the Kuwaiti army and U.S. forces started joint exercises on Sunday "to train command bodies in measures to take according to plans to defend our country," Kuwait's military command announced.

The joint exercises are to run until Wednesday. They are also designed to enable Kuwaiti forces to train with different weapons "to increase their level of combat readiness," the military command said.

Kuwait and the United States have been linked by a defence pact since a U.S.-led military coalition evicted Iraqi occupation forces from the emirate in the 1991 Gulf war.

The United States has deployed 36 combat aircraft and 5,000 soldiers in Kuwait since the U.N.-Iraq crisis over arms inspections.

The crisis was defused last month in an accord signed by U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan and Iraqi Deputy Prime Minister Tareq Aziz opening all suspected weapons sites to U.N. inspectors.

Clinton plans no meeting with Garang

WASHINGTON (AFP) — The White House denied Sunday that U.S. President Bill Clinton planned to meet with Sudanese rebel leader John Garang while on an African trip that begins Monday.

"There are no plans for any such meeting," said White House spokesman Barry Toiv. "It's not under discussion, to my knowledge."

In Kampala, the capital of Uganda, the state-owned Sunday Vision had reported that Mr. Clinton would will meet Col. Garang during his visit to Uganda on Tuesday and Wednesday.

Col. Garang's Sudan People's Liberation Army (SPLA) in Nairobi had told the paper, "our request to meet him has been granted."

Since 1983, the SPLA, made up of mostly Christian and animist southerners, has been fighting the Islamist military regime of Sudanese President Omar Al Bashir.

Group charged with carrying out peace accord meets in Sudan

KHARTOUM (AP) — A group charged with implementing a peace accord between Sudan's Islamist government and seven southern rebel factions met Sunday for the first time in a step that could lead to a referendum on the fate of war-ravaged southern Sudan.

The Southern Sudanese Coordination Council, formed last month, has 25 members, including Sudanese President Omar Al Bashir, Vice President Ali Osman Mohammad Taha and 10 governors of southern states. Its president is Riak Machar, a former rebel leader.

"This is a historic meeting," Gen. Bashir told the council in a speech broadcast live on official radio.

The accord between the rebels and the government, which was signed April 21, provides for a referendum in which southerners would chose whether the vast, underdeveloped region of Africa's largest country should secede. The agreement also provides for the Coordinating Council to implement the agreement.

The Sudan People's Liberation Army, however, was not part of the accord. As the largest rebel group in the south, its consent would be crucial in ending the 15-year civil war.

Sudanese officials still put hope in the pact.

"We know it is a very heavy burden that awaits you, solving the problems of the south which have been accumulating since the colonial era," Gen. Bashir said. "You will carry out this mission not only for the south alone, but for the whole nation."

Gen. Bashir said the civil war was the source of many of Sudan's difficulties and called the region "our first and main problem."

The council's headquarters will be set up in the southern city of Juba, although Sunday's meeting took place in Khartoum.

U.S. troops 'massacred 1,000 Somalis' — report

LONDON (AFP) — U.S. troops, trapped in the streets of Mogadishu after a botched operation in 1993 to capture Somali warlord Mohammad Farah Aidid, massacred 1,000 Somalis — five times the "official" number", a report said Sunday.

The London weekly newspaper The Observer cited evidence collated by a U.S. journalist, Mark Bowden of the *Philadelphia Inquirer*, indicating that U.S. troops fired indiscriminately on crowds of Somalis, including women and children.

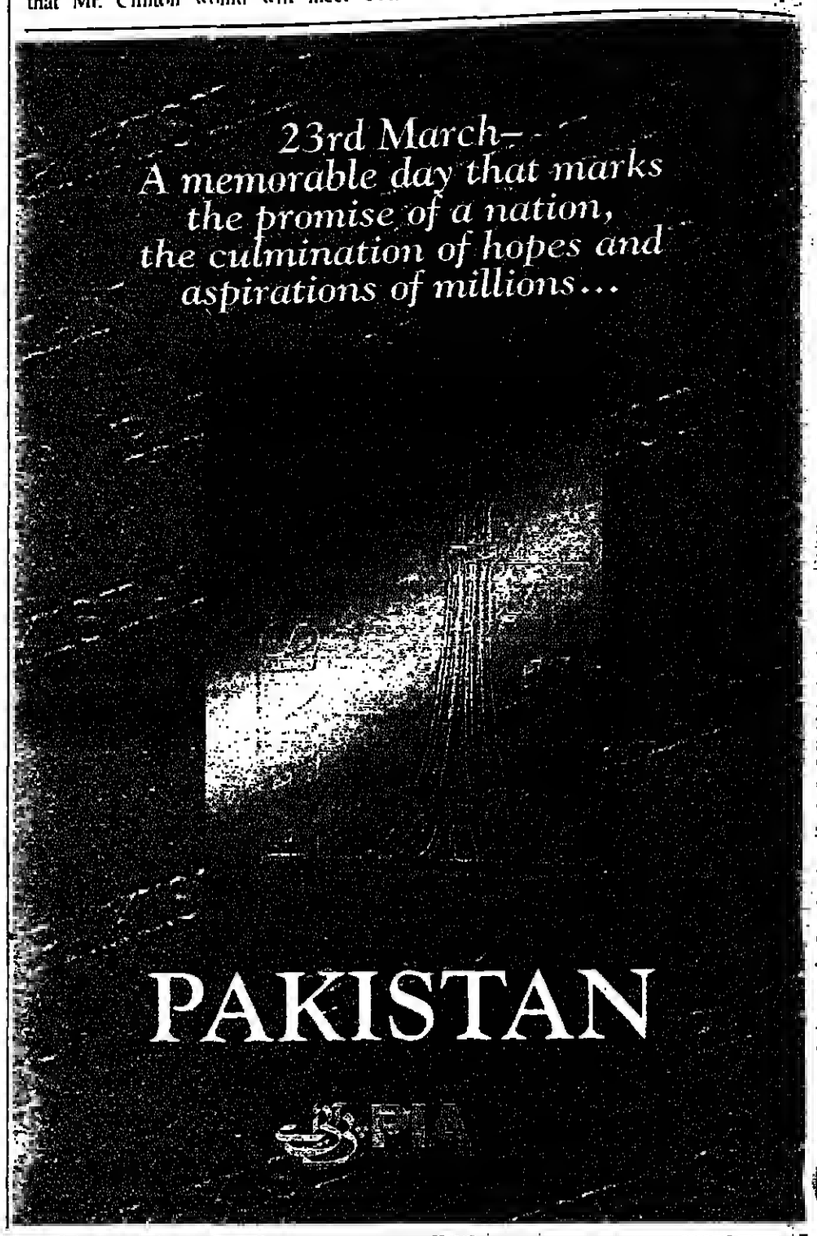
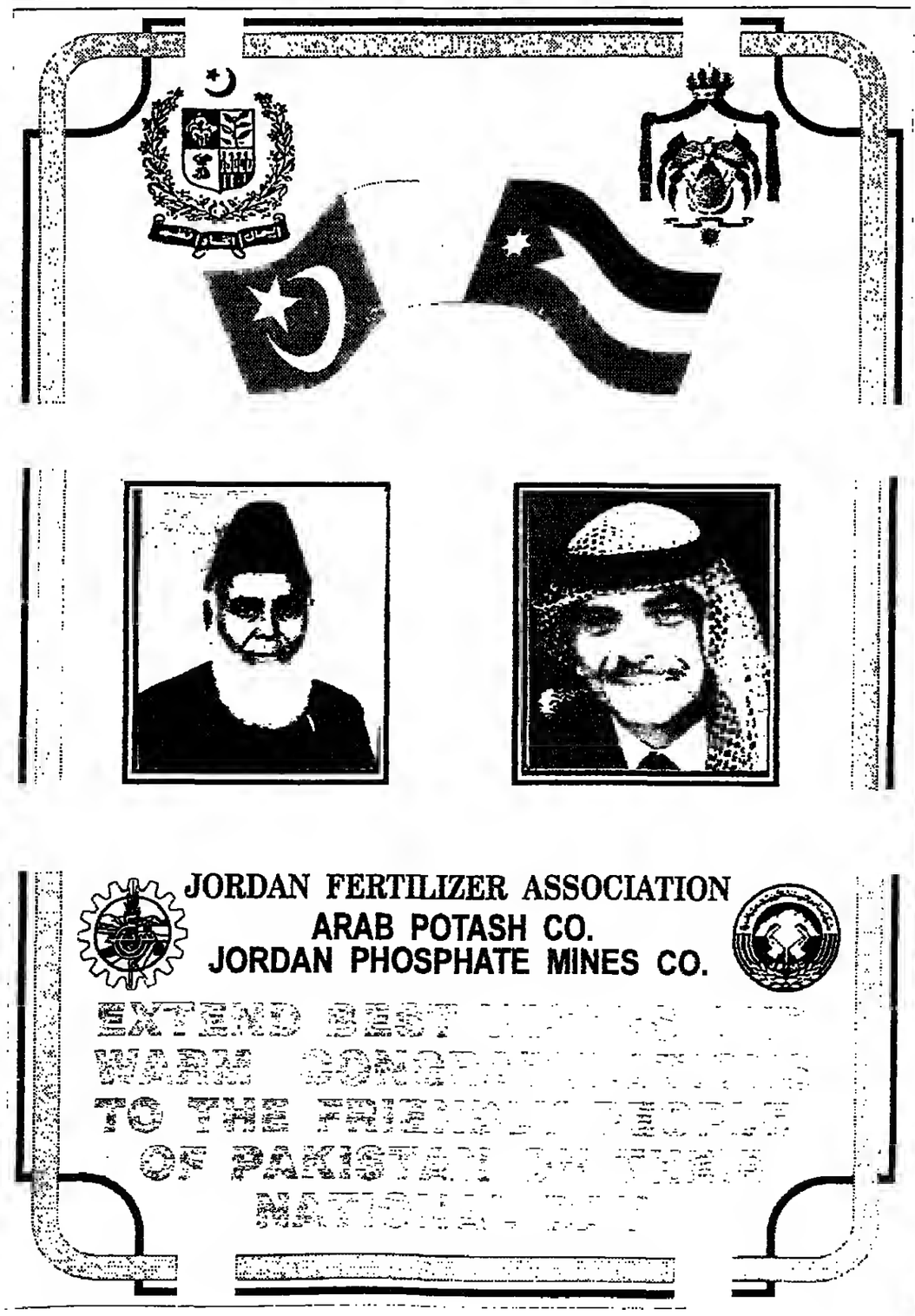
Mr. Bowden, who has made his account available on the Internet and plans to publish a book this autumn, quotes Ambassador Robert Oakley, the U.S. special representative to Somalia, as saying that more than 1,000 Somalis had been killed, The Observer said.

The journalist based his account on hours of interviews with U.S. and Somali survivors, it added.

The incident occurred on Oct. 3, 1993, during the ill-fated U.S.-led United Nations intervention in Somalia. The Somali casualties were estimated at 200.

Eighteen U.S. soldiers were killed during the attempt to seize Gen. Aideed, after their helicopter was shot out of the sky. Some of the soldiers' bodies were later dragged through the streets of Mogadishu, shown in dramatic television footage which captured the attention of the world's media.

Despite the debacle, the commander of the U.S. operation, Major-General William F. Garrison, described it a "success," while all those who died were given medals, as were many of the survivors, The Observer said.

In the raid by U.S. special forces, which was backed up by 17 helicopter gunships, 24 prisoners were seized from a meeting of Somali leaders, but then the convoy found its way back to the U.S. base blocked by Somali gunmen firing AK47s and rocket grenades from rooftops or moving with the crowds, the newspaper said.

Eventually, it had to be rescued by units from Pakistan and Malaysia.